Unveiling the Harem

Elite Women and the Paradox of Seclusion in Eighteenth-Century Cairo

Mary Ann Fay

There is a long history in the West of representing Middle Eastern women as uniformly oppressed by Islam, by Islamic law, and by men. Stereotypical views of Middle Eastern women today maintain that they are without legal rights, do not attend universities or have jobs outside their homes, and are not full citizens of their countries because they cannot vote or hold public office. Similar misinformation circulated in the eighteenth century when European male travelers to Egypt, documenting their observations, depicted harem women as sexual objects, deprived of autonomy, and held captive by their husbands. Fay's *Unveiling the Harem* offers a persuasive corrective to this distorted view of Middle Eastern women.

Instead of the odalisque of nineteenth-century painting and the fevered imaginings of European travelers, historical research reveals that elite women in powerful, wealthy households exercised their rights under Islamic law, property rights in particular, to become owners of lucrative real estate in Cairo as well as influential members of their families and the wider society. One such woman, Sitt Nafisa, who was literate in several languages, commissioned a public water fountain and a Qur'anic school that still stands today. She played a pivotal role as the intermediary between French officials and her husband, who was leading the revolt against the French from Upper Egypt. Based on documents from various archives in Cairo,

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Mary Ann Fay

Manufactured in the United States of America

To John and Zack

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Acknowledgments

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I am grateful to the support given to me by various scholars at the early stages of my work. These include Nelly Hanna, who took an interest in what I was uncovering in the archives and invited me to join her on a panel at an international conference where for the first time I presented a paper based on my archival work. Early on, Madeline Zilfi also

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and his love, companionship, and support. I am particularly grateful for his willingness to take a detour from his own academic path in order to accompany me to Egypt with our son Zack. My memories of doing research in Egypt will always be intertwined with indelible scenes from family life: Zack taking his first steps at our flat in Zamalek or playing his first-ever soccer game as a kindergartener at Cairo American College. This book is dedicated to the two of them.

A Note on the Transliteration

The transliteration system used is that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Initial *hamza*s are dropped but are used when they fall in the middle or at the end of a word. No diacritical marks other than the *hamza* and the *ayn* are used. Turkish words are written in Turkish where appropriate; otherwise they are Arabicized. For example, *ocak,* the singular form of the Ottoman Turkish word for the military units garrisoned at the Citadel in Cairo, is written in its Arabic form as *ojaq*. Place names have been written as they are commonly used in English, such as Mecca. Generally, the Arabic *j* has been transliterated as *j* except where the Egyptian *g* is more familiar, such as Giza.

Introduction

Unveiling the Harem is a historical study of women embedded in a social and cultural history of Egypt and Cairo during the period of the Mamluk revival. In the pages that follow, I argue that elite women, identified as women in the Mamluk households that were constructed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, were able to achieve real economic, social, and even political power or influence for several reasons:

• the legal rights given to Muslim women in the Qur'an, particularly property rights;

• the legal personhood of adult women that gave them in the economic sphere the right to buy and sell property, inherit property from others, make wills and contracts, run businesses, invest in the lucrative urban commercial economy of Cairo, and endow their property as *waqf*s;

• the status and influence women derived from their position as wives and/or concubines in powerful Mamluk households, from their own personal wealth and their control over others' property as administrators *(naziras)* of religious endowments, from their role in the kinship construction of the Mamluks as a tactic to create links between and within households, and from their contributions to the continuity and stability of their household and the reproduction of its power.

The evidence presented here challenges as false and ahistorical Western perceptions of the harem or female seclusion, veiling, and gender segregation as detrimental to women's ability to achieve economic and social power. In the eighteenth century, representations of "Oriental" women appeared mostly in travel literature and memoirs and eventually in the novels and paintings of the nineteenth century and in various forms of electronic media. What has been overlooked is the central role played by the

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harem, or rather by Western representations of the harem and the women who resided there, in the construction of the stereotypes of Muslim/Arab women both in the past and in the contemporary period.

There is a long history in the West of representing Middle Eastern women as uniformly oppressed by Islam, by Islamic law *(shari'a),* and by their male relatives, including their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Stereotypical views of Middle Eastern women today hold that they are without legal rights, do not go to university or to jobs outside the home, and are not fully citizens of their countries because they cannot vote or hold public office. Anyone who teaches at a U.S. university or college is familiar with these stereotypes based on the comments or questions of students and some faculty, many of whom, particularly after 9/11, have a sincere desire to learn more about this part of the world and the people who live in it. However, when told that Muslim women have legal rights, including the right to own property, and had them before women in the United States and Britain obtained them in the late nineteenth century, some react with disbelief.

Media stereotypes of Arab/Muslim women do not prepare Americans for the knowledge that women attend universities and that in many states of the Middle East and North Africa they outnumber men in postsecondary education. Even in Saudi Arabia, considered by many in the West to epitomize female oppression, women outnumber men in universities and other postsecondary educational institutions.[1] Although women's labor force participation (LFP) in the Middle East and North Africa is, along with Latin America, the lowest in the world, which means under 30 percent, it has risen by about 5 percent between 1998 and 2008. In the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait, women's LFP is more than 40 percent.[2] Muslim countries have had women heads of state, including Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, the largest Muslim country in the world, and Benazir Ali Bhutto of Pakistan.

In the eighteenth century, European male travelers to Egypt, who were meticulous and detailed in their observations, generally knew very little about Islamic law or women's rights and almost certainly were never invited to a private home or into a harem. Yet, in their travel writings, they presented themselves as knowledgeable about women, whom they depicted in derogatory terms. They derided women for being overweight due to the

inactivity and sloth induced by harem life. With little to occupy them or their unschooled minds, harem women were said to be bored, indolent, and childlike. One observer, C. S. Sonnini, in a fit of pique and sexual jealousy, lamented that the faces of harem women were concealed by veils and even face masks for one man only, "a tyrant who holds them in captivity."[3] Because Europeans saw and remarked on veiled women in the streets, they equated the harem with veiling and polygamy and concluded that these were tools used by the society to deprive women of any autonomy and to maintain them under the strict control of their fathers and husbands.

European men, who came from societies where monogamy was enforced by religion, law, and society, were confronted by what they wrongly believed was a sexually profligate society that they could condemn while secretly envying Middle Eastern men their right to four wives, unlimited slave-concubines, and easy divorce. While they were congratulating themselves on the sexual morality of their own societies, which did not practice polygamy and did not have harems and where women did not wear the veil, they were also asserting the superiority of Western civilization in general, as measured by what they asserted was the superior status of women in the West. Using these standards, societies worthy of being called civilized were those that were most like the West. Excluded from this elite company were the Islamic regions of the world, which would need to be tutored for a prolonged period before they could join the community of independent nations. Thus, in the nineteenth century and the era of imperial expansion, the British picked up the "white man's burden" and the French began *la mission civilisatrice,* which imperial administrators often articulated in terms relating to women and their status in society.

The use of women's perceived status in society as a determinant of civilization remains with us today and is closely linked to the imperial practice—then and now—of justifying the invasion and occupation of the Middle East and elsewhere in order to liberate women who are deemed victims of a backward society and religion. Women became both cause and effect of the decline of Islamic civilization according to a rationale that went like this: Because women were virtually imprisoned in harems and unschooled, they could not raise their sons in a manner that would fit them to govern. Thus, in order to create a political class that could take power and

rule, women's status had to be improved by the elimination of the harem and by schooling that would train women to be better mothers and household managers.[4] The nineteenth-century arch-imperialist Lord Cromer, the longest-serving agent and consul general after the 1882 British invasion of Egypt, made it clear in his memoirs that polygamy, female seclusion, and veiling were fatal obstacles to reform and modernity in Egypt. According to Cromer, only if these practices were eliminated and the status of women elevated would the introduction of European civilization into Egypt take hold and put the society on the path to improvement.[5] Thus the legacy of the harem into the modern period is that female seclusion along with veiling and gender segregation are not only signs of the degradation and oppression of Muslim-Arab women but also of social decay.

Ingrained ideas about women and their lack of autonomy and a voice of their own have empowered others to speak in their name and to use their perceived oppression as justification for invasion, occupation, and social engineering. Gustave Flaubert, who visited Egypt in 1849–50, expressed these ideas well in his travel diaries and letters to family and friends. In a letter to his mistress justifying his sexual encounters with the dancer Kuchuk Hanum in Esna, he described her as the archetypical Oriental woman who was passive, unable to represent herself or act autonomously.[6]

When the United States has troops on the ground in both Afghanistan and Iraq, justifications for invasion and occupation have included liberating women. In November 2001, First Lady Laura Bush gave a national radio address about the need to liberate Afghan women from al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which banned female education and prohibited women from working and even leaving the house without a male relative as an escort.[7] Although the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 1996 and since that time had been implementing the policies against women that Mrs. Bush condemned in her speech, liberating Afghan women did not become a priority for the U.S. government until after 9/11 when U.S forces attacked al-Qaeda positions in the country and the Taliban government that allowed the group to operate on Afghan territory.

When President Obama assumed office in 2009, other voices were raised in support of increasing the number of U.S. forces in the country or maintaining the U.S. military in the country in order to save Afghan women, in

spite of evidence that the condition of Afghan women has worsened despite the U.S. presence. For example, Ann Jones in an article in the *Nation* described the Hazara women and women members of Parliament who have been protesting against the Shi'ite Personal Status Law (SPSL). Also known by its Western opponents as the Marital Rape Law, the SPSL, approved in July 2009 not by the Taliban but by U.S. ally President Hamid Karzai, severely restricts the rights of women among Afghanistan's Shi'a minority.[8]

Nevertheless, in September 2009 as the Obama administration was debating strategy for the war in Afghanistan, Tina Brown, the founder and editor in chief of the aggregated news site known as the *Daily Beast* and a former editor of the *New Yorker,* posted an article entitled "Let's Not Abandon Afghan Women" in which she asked, "are we really considering throwing Afghan women back into the darkness after their return to freedom?"[9] The issues that concern us here are the use of women to justify war and the implication that Muslim women are unable to act autonomously or to organize themselves to protect their interests or change their circumstances. As Rana Kabbani has noted, "Orientalist bad faith remains in our time the essential underpinning of Western foreign policy towards the Arab and Islamic world."[10]

Although the harem no longer exists as an institution as it did two centuries ago, the ideas it engendered about women and their status are still with us and live in many contemporary representations of Middle Eastern women. As in the past, women are reduced to a set of characteristics—veiled, segregated from men, secluded in the home—that presume oppression and the lack of rights across historical epochs, cultures, and the broad swath of geography known as the Muslim world. Historical research into the lives of harem women in the eighteenth century can, by deconstructing Orientalist perceptions of women in the past, erode the foundation on which stereotypes of contemporary Muslim women have been constructed.

Searching for the Historical Harem

My interest in the harem dates back to my first year in the PhD program at Georgetown University and to a course with Judith Tucker on the social history of the Middle East. What intrigued me was that the harem in Egypt,

along with slavery, ended gradually and without a major social upheaval. As an American, I was fascinated by the discovery that slavery, which was closely associated with the harem and the military elite that had governed Egypt for so long, ended without a bloody, prolonged conflict like the Civil War in the United States. Why was that? I wondered. Even at that stage of my nascent research project, it was clear that explaining the demise of the harem and the disappearance of slavery, two linked institutions, hinged on understanding both when they were an intrinsic part of the social, political, and economic life of the time. Thus I found myself moving backward in time to the eighteenth century and the period of the Mamluk revival that was characterized by many things including harems for women of the elite, the overwhelming majority of whom came to Cairo as slave-concubines from Georgia or Circassia.

The sources for a serious, academic investigation of eighteenth-century Mamluk women and the harem were not immediately apparent. Fortunately Daniel Crecelius's study discussed Mamluk women in connection with the construction of alliances through marriage.[11] Some of Crecelius's information came from the religious endowments, *waqf*s, made by women who had married prominent Mamluks of the time. This was a beginning, and I applied for permission to use the archives of the Ministry of Awqaf in Bab al-Luq and the archives at the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya (the National Archives). It was ultimately fortunate for me that the Egyptian bureaucracy moves slowly and that I was directed by the delay in gaining access to the archives toward other sources and other collections that I could utilize in my research. These included the library at the American University in Cairo (AUC) that holds a copy of the monumental *Description de l'Egypte* along with other invaluable primary and secondary sources such as the chronicles of al-Jabarti, the extensive collection of travelers' journals and memoirs, and various studies of Egypt's domestic and public architecture in the K. A. C. Creswell Library. I was also able to use the library at the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) and the resources of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE).

One of the most appealing aspects of doing research in Cairo is the community of scholars at AUC, ARCE, and Cairo University. AUC provided Fulbright scholars with access to its libraries as well as its series

of lectures and seminars. I was fortunate to be there for a series of three lectures by the French historian André Raymond. Although I have notes of all three lectures, the one I remember most clearly was titled "Urban Networks and Popular Movements in the Late Eighteenth Century." What struck me most forcefully was Raymond's extensive knowledge of the eighteenth-century city. It was almost as if Raymond carried a map of the city in his head that showed not only its geographical expanse and neighborhoods but the location of its *suq*s and *wakala,* its mosques and monuments, and the great houses of the Mamluk grandees and wealthy merchants. As I listened to Professor Raymond, a question came into my head: "Where did the women I was researching live?" This question was followed by others: Where were their neighborhoods? Where were their houses and ultimately where in those houses was the harem? The search for the historical harem also came to mean not just the use of written documents but also a study of the material culture that could tell us about how women lived in the city and in their homes. In the historiography, Mamluk women generally have been regarded as appendages to their households, to the Mamluk system, and to history in general. Instead, my approach has been to represent Mamluk women as historical subjects whose lives were integrated into and integral to their households, their neighborhoods, and their city.

Consequently, for as long as I have been engaged in this project devoted to the lives of eighteenth-century Mamluk women, my research has followed two trajectories, one the more traditional path of the historian, which is research in the appropriate primary source documents, especially the *waqfiyyat* (religious endowment deeds), and the second the material culture, particularly the domestic architecture of the period and the homes of the Mamluk elite. On subsequent research trips, I was able to expand my research into the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya, the National Archives, and continue my study of elite homes that were still standing in various neighborhoods around the city. ARCE, where I had a fellowship, had begun its preliminary conservation work on the house known as the Bayt al-Razzaz, which was central to my ruminations on how women lived in their homes and where the harem was located as a physical space. As an ARCE fellow, I had access to the center's library and to the documentary materials related to work on the Bayt al-Razzaz.

Methodology

This study of Mamluk women in eighteenth-century Cairo encompasses the revival of Mamluk power in Egypt in the late seventeenth century to the French invasion of 1798 that effectively brought this period to an end. However, the study focuses on the rise of the Qazdughli household from the time of Hasan Katkhuda until the deaths of the last Mamluks, Murad Bey of the plague in 1801 during the French occupation and his widow, Nafisa al-Bayda, in 1816. In part, this trajectory emerged from the prominent role played by the Qazdughli household in the eighteenth-century history of Egypt and also from my desire to highlight three women whose lives spanned the rise and demise of the Qazdughlis and the Mamluk era. The first of these women is Amina, the daughter of Hasan Gurbagi al-Qandaggi (d. 1716), who married Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, one of the former *mamluk*s of Mustafa al-Qazdughli, the founder of the Qazdughli household. Amina was the mother of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda, who is remembered not only as a powerful Mamluk but also as a builder and restorer of Islamic monuments. After the death of her first husband, she married another of the powerful and wealthy Mamluks of the era, 'Uthman Katkhuda (d. 1736). The second woman is Shawikar Qadin, 'Uthman Katkhuda's concubine and the wife of the architect of Qazdughli power, Ibrahim Katkhuda (d. 1754); and the third woman is Nafisa al-Bayda, wife and widow of Ibrahim Katkhuda's favorite *mamluk*, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir (d. 1773), and after his death, of Murad Bey. Their lives intersected with one another and with important events in the rise to dominance of the Qazdughli household and demonstrate the important roles they played within the Mamluk system.

Following the trail laid by Crecelius, I decided to look for evidence of women's property ownership, and the Ministry of Awqaf with its collection of religious endowments deeds *(waqfiyyat)* seemed like the ideal place to begin. The advantage to doing research at the ministry is first that there is an accurate, useable, and chronological index to the *waqfiyyat* that allowed me to create my own index of eighteenth-century *waqf*s made by men and women and to do quantitative work with this data.

The number of donors is the basis for analysis rather than the number of *waqf*s in order to determine the total number of individual women donors

and individual men donors and to calculate the percentage of women and of men making endowments in relation to the total number of endowments for the century. Using the number of donors rather than of endowments is also necessary because some women and men made multiple endowments, each of which is recorded with a separate number in the index. The total of men and women creating *waqf*s in the eighteenth century as individuals or as parts of a group was 522, including 396 men and 126 women. These numbers include 22 women and 32 men who created six *waqf*s with multiple donors of men and women. Based on the number of donors, women were 24 percent of the total. This percentage is comparable to the percentages during the Ottoman period obtained by other researchers including Gabriel Baer (Istanbul and Aleppo), Haim Gerber (Edirne), and Beshara Doumani (Nablus and Tripoli).[12]

The index records each *waqf* this way: the name of the donor; a short description of the property endowed; the court where the endowment was recorded; the month, day, and year when the endowment was recorded; and the number assigned to the *waqf* by the ministry. Notes in the margins indicate the beneficiaries of the endowment but in a very superficial way, for example, by noting simply *khayri,* which is a *waqf* for religious or charitable purposes. Once I had recorded all the *waqf*s made by women for the relevant period, I abstracted the *waqf*s of women identifiable as members of Mamluk households for reading along with a selection of non-Mamluk women for comparative purposes. I also selected a number of men's *waqf*s for reading, also for comparative purposes. The *waqf* documents contain biographical information about the donor and others named in the deed as donors, administrators, or recipients of the endowment's income, whether religious institutions, charities, or individuals. The documents also contain descriptions of the properties endowed, their locations, and the stipulations concerning the allocation of the *waqf*'s income.

By far the largest *waqf*s in terms of the number of properties included in the endowment and the approximate value of the properties were those of women of the Mamluk households. These women were identifiable by their names, which included information about their origins and present status. For example, women's names identified them as former slaves who converted to Islam and as wives or widows of Mamluk men who are also

identifiable by their titles and rank in the Mamluk hierarchy. One example is one of the best known of the Mamluk women of her time: Al-Sitt al-Masuna Shawikar Qadin Bint ‘Abd Allah al-Bayda Ma‘tuqat al-Marhum al-Amir ‘Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli wa al-Ma‘rufa bi zawjat al-Marhum al-Amir Ibrahim Katkhuda Ta’ifat Mustahfizan al-Qazdughli. Translated, the name means “The Esteemed Lady Shawikar Qadin daughter of God’s servant, the white, freed slave of the deceased amir ‘Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli of the Mustahfizan (Janissaries) and known as the wife of the deceased Amir Ibrahim Katkhuda of the Mustahfizan.” Thus her name reveals that she was a former slave, *ma‘tuqa,* of the deceased ‘Uthman Katkhuda of the Janissaries and the Qazdughli household and one of the wealthiest and most powerful men of his time. We also know that she was not born a Muslim but converted, because of the appellation “Bint ‘Abd Allah,” daughter of God’s servant, which indicates that she did not have a Muslim father. The addition of “al-Bayda” indicates that she was from Georgia or the Caucasus. She is also named as the wife, *zawja,* of the deceased Ibrahim Katkhuda, head of the Janissaries and head of the Qazdughli household. Besides providing biographical information about the donor, her name shows the various links and connections among the members, male and female, of the Mamluk elite. Her name also demonstrates how women were symbols of lineage continuity and how their marriages legitimized the successors to power within the Mamluk system.

In addition to research in documents at the Ministry of Awqaf and the Dar al-Watha’iq al-Qawmiyya, I also did research into the material culture of Cairo during this period, primarily by studying the eighteenth-century houses of the Mamluk grandees or rich merchants in the Mamluk style that were still standing. These included primarily the Bayt al-Razzaz, the Musafirkhana Palace, the Bayt al-Suhaymi, and the house of Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Sinnari. I made repeated visits to the houses, took notes on the various rooms and features of the houses, and photographed them. In the case of the Musafirkhana Palace, which was destroyed in a fire in 1998, the photographs provide a valuable historical record of the house and its most notable feature, the screen of turned wood known as *mashrabiyya* with windows of colored glass above it in the women’s salon on the first floor.

1. *Mashrabiyya* screen surmounted by windows of colored glass in the women's/family quarters of the Musafirkhana Palace.

The objective of this research was to understand how women lived in their homes and how space was allocated in the house between men and women. My research led me to conclude that the harem should not be conceptualized as an enclosed physical space within a house that women could not leave. Rather, the harem should be conceptualized as an inscription on a woman's body that she created indoors and outdoors by her movement through space. I was persuaded by the layout of the interior rooms and the architectonics, particularly the use of *mashrabiyya,* that women had access to virtually all of the house while men were restricted largely to the men's salon on the ground floor, known as the *mandara* during this period.

In addition to the houses, understanding the urban geography of the city in the eighteenth century was equally important. Using Raymond's map of the city in 1750, it was possible to traverse neighborhoods that existed in the eighteenth century, although they have changed greatly in the intervening 150-plus years or, like Azbakiyya, the most exclusive of all the Mamluk residential quarters, have been entirely demolished. However,

it is possible still to walk the route along what was the city's main canal, Al-Khalig al-Misri, now Sharia Port Said, north to the Bab al-Sha'rriyya or east and west from Bab al-Luq to Bab Zuwayla and find landmarks like the *sabil-kuttab* (Qur'anic school with a public fountain) built by Nafisa al-Bayda and the Bayt al-Razzaz, outside the Bab Zuwayla gate in the Suq al-Silah neighborhood, or the house of Ibrahim al-Sinnari, the *katkhuda* (highest ranking member) of Murad Bey's household, in what was once an elite Mamluk neighborhood around the Birkat al-Fil, a pond or small lake that filled every year with the inundation of the Nile, so named because it resembled the head of an elephant. My research on Mamluk architecture and the quarters of the eighteenth-century city relied a great deal on such scholarly works as Muhammad Amin and Laila A. Ibrahim's *Al-Mastala-hat Al-Ma'amariyy fi al Watha'iq al-Mamlukiyya, 648–923 H* (Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents (1250–1517); André Raymond's *Le Caire des Janissaires: L'apogée de la ville ottomane sous 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda, Cairo,* and his "Essai de Geographie des Quartiers de Residence Aristocratique au Caire au XVIIIème Siècle"; Doris Behrens-Abouseif's *Azbakiyya and Its Environs 1476–1879;* Alexander Lezine's "Les Salles Nobles des Palais Mamlukes"; Jacques Revault's "L'Architecture Domestique au Caire à l'Époque Ottomane" and other essays in *Palais et Maisons du Caire,* volumes 1 and 2; Nelly Hanna's *Habiter au Caire;* and Janet Abu-Lughod's *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious.*

Finally, the chronicle of al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar fi al-tarajim wa al-akhbar,* which has been translated into French and English, became a crucial component of my research.[13] Al-Jabarti has been overlooked as a source for the history of eighteenth-century women who often appear in the pages of his chronicle, either in necrologies of their own or in those of men who were their fathers or husbands or in accounts of events in which he gives women a prominent or important role. Reading al-Jabarti revealed the linkages between Mamluk men and women and also between women and women. One of the most important of these for me, because it brought Nafisa al-Bayda to life, was the discovery of what appears to be a long friendship between her and a woman named Adela Hanim, the daughter of Ibrahim Katkhuda, whose favorite *mamluk,* 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, was Nafisa's husband. It is rare in early modern history to find clues to the affective lives

of women—or men. Al-Jabarti was also important for understanding the lives of Mamluk women after the retreat of their men to Upper Egypt after the French invasion, and it becomes clear in these accounts how prominent a role Nafisa played as an intermediary between the Mamluks and the French and later the newly installed Ottoman governor, and how both French and Ottoman officials regarded her as the de facto leader of the women who were left behind, and even possibly of insurrectionist activities.

Finally, it is useful to explain the use of the words *harem, Mamluk,* and *mamluk* in the text. Harem is a familiar word in the English language and is thus used here instead of *haramlik* or *harim*. However, chapter 1, "Reimagining the Harem: From Orientalist Fantasies to Historical Reconstruction," challenges the Orientalist representations that are called to mind when the word harem is used. Also, the word harem is redefined as the linked practices of female seclusion (which was not absolute or prisonlike), veiling, and gender segregation. The harem of eighteenth-century Egypt is compared to practices in other societies such as ancient Athens and Byzantium, not to show that all harems are the same but rather to show that the harem is not an example of Islamic or Middle Eastern exceptionalism and to ascertain the significance or meaning of these practices across cultures and historical time. Concerning the use of the terms *Mamluk* and *mamluk,* the first refers to the sultanate that lasted from 1260 to 1516–17 and then to the Mamluk revival of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which the power of the resurgent Mamluks was based in competing households whose members were predominantly of slave origin. The history of the Mamluk revival is the subject of chapter 2, "Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Transition from the Medieval to the Early Modern." Thus the term *Mamluk* refers to the system rather than to individual slaves, who are known in Arabic as *mamluk*s.

Theorizing Women and the Harem

Women's history is transgressive. Because the universal historical subject has traditionally been male, women could not become historical subjects in the traditional way, unless they were the women worthies—queens and presidents—who had histories written about them because they achieved

power in the domain of men. How women's history developed from a chronicle of the lives of the so-called "women worthies" to gender history occurred in tandem with important events and movements inside and outside the academy. These developments in women's history made it possible for *Unveiling the Harem* not only to tell the story of elite eighteenth-century women, some of whom, like Nafisa al-Bayda, were indeed "women worthies," but also to show how a gendered history of their lives can change the way we view the Mamluk revival of the eighteenth century.

One of the first steps toward the construction of women as historical subjects was taken by Joan Kelly-Gadol when she asked the question that opened up new ways of thinking about women and how their experiences differed from men's: "Did women have a Renaissance?"[14] With this question, Kelly-Gadol pointed the way to a history of women separate from men's history, which, consequently, delegitimized history as that of the universal (male) subject. Her research showed that women did not experience the Renaissance the same way that men did. Rather than liberating women, it reinforced male control over their property and their persons. The creation of the field of women's history within the discipline of history and the academic posts within departments to support teaching and research was aided by the turn toward social history with its focus on the marginalized, including women, and their historical agency. Outside the academy, a reenergized women's movement, known as second-wave feminism, articulated an agenda for expanded women's rights as well as a feminist theory and methodology that influenced and supported efforts by academic women. During this period, important collections appeared including, in 1977, *Becoming Visible: Women in European History,* edited by Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard, which included the article by Kelly-Gadol.[15]

In the field of Middle East Studies, *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak,* edited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qattan Bezirgan, appeared in 1977, and *Women in the Muslim World,* edited by Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, appeared in 1978. Ronald Jennings published an article entitled "Women in the Early Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Judicial Records" in 1975 just as historians were discovering the importance of Islamic court records for economic and social history.[16] Ten years later,

in 1985, Tucker published the monograph *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt,* which showed how court records could be used for women's history and social history and how knowledge of women's lives contributes to or revises our understanding of history.[17]

In 1982, as women's history was evolving, Elizabeth Fox Genovese asked another important question, namely, whether women's history changed the way history is written:

> [A]dding women to the received account—especially in the form of a few more neglected worthies or a lot more descriptive social history—does not necessarily change anything substantive in our manner of writing history. Make no mistake, the inclusion of women within conventional historical narratives cannot be dismissed lightly. Their exclusion has been so total that every rectification must be welcome. The sheer quantitative accumulation of information alone will force choices—force us to drop standard material on men and sharpen the visibility of women within history. But adding women to history is not the same as adding women's history.[18]

Six years later, Joan Scott, in her influential essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," articulated the challenge for women's history this way:

> It has not been enough for historians of women to prove either that women had a history or that women participated in the major political upheavals of Western civilization. In the case of women's history, the response of most nonfeminist historians has been acknowledgement and then separation or dismissal ("women had a history separate from men's, therefore let feminists do women's history which need not concern us"; or "women's history is about sex and the family and should be done separately from political and economic history"). In the case of women's participation, the response has been minimal at best ("my understanding of the French Revolution is not changed by knowing that women participated in it"). The challenge posed by these responses is, in the end, a theoretical one.[19]

The answer to these questions was the use of gender as a primary tool of historical analysis. The origins of gender theory can be traced back to

questions about how the oppression of women occurred, and among the first to follow this line of inquiry were feminist anthropologists, in particular students and scholars at the University of Michigan in the 1970s, among them Gayle Rubin and Rayna Reiter (now Rapp). Rubin was the first Women's Studies major at the university and her article "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" was originally written as her senior thesis and then rewritten as an essay for Rapp's anthology *Toward an Anthropology of Women*.[20] "The Traffic in Women" is the most cited article in cultural anthropology, and its influence thirty-five years after its original publication is still felt in women's history, feminist anthropology, and queer theory.[21] Rubin, relying on the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, located the source of women's oppression in what Strauss described as the exchange of women among males, which he deemed fundamental to the construction of kinship.[22] If this were so, Rubin theorized, then for a kinship system to arise, women had to be deprived of their right to themselves, which established an asymmetry in power relations between men and women. Rubin's crucial insight was that the exchange of women took place within social systems, and thus male dominance and female oppression were rooted in social systems, not in female biology. From this analysis emerged Rubin's articulation of a sex/gender system in which humans are male or female biologically while gender is the system that transforms males and females into men and women. According to Rubin, "the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality."[23]

Joan Scott's theory of gender, building on Rubin's insights, takes as its premise that gender is the social and cultural construction of sexual differences as opposed to sex, which is rooted in biology. Scott defines gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[24] As a constitutive element of social relationships, Scott argues, gender consists of a set of culturally available symbols and concepts that are expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political institutions that "typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine."[25]

Scott's gender theory emerged not from an attempt to explain the origins of women's oppression, largely abandoned now as a project by feminist scholars, but in response to poststructuralist deconstruction and its challenges to historical methodology and epistemology, namely by criticizing the Enlightenment understanding of the self as coherent, autonomous, and stable and by its critique of metanarratives such as gender, which claim broad explanatory powers. Scott's narrative turn to embrace poststructuralism, gender, and history is not without its critics who have argued that just as the subject was being declared dead, women and other marginalized groups had found their voice and were beginning to write as subjects of their own history. However, as Susan Kingsley Kent has argued in defense of Scott, "Using gender as a category of analysis, historians have produced compelling studies in which the actions and agency of real women have consequences for whole states, societies, and economies. Far from erasing real women from existence, Scott's gender theory has greatly enriched approaches to women, gender, and politics."[26]

In this study of the Mamluk revival of the eighteenth century, gender is used as the primary tool of analysis. Gender theory helps us to understand the asymmetries of power between men and women and how this imbalance was maintained and reproduced within Mamluk society. Lévi-Strauss's theory about kinship as reformulated by Rubin also has important implications for Mamluk society because the Mamluks enlarged and reproduced their households not primarily through natural reproduction but through the recruitment and training of slaves. Although historians have argued that the Mamluk system was unstable, prone to disintegration, and wracked by internecine warfare, in fact the Mamluk slave system showed remarkable longevity. One way to explain this longevity is through the Mamluks' construction of kinship systems that were mostly fictive but sometimes real, as when a Mamluk amir arranged a marriage between his sister and a member of his household. Otherwise, a Mamluk amir arranged marriages between his *mamluk*s and women in his household who were sometimes concubines and sometimes widows. Kinship construction appears to have compensated for the absence of biological reproduction as a way to strengthen the bonds between men both vertically and horizontally within the Mamluk system. In order for these marriages to take

place, as Rubin noted, women's sexual autonomy had to be constrained. However, the importance of women's acquiescence to these arrangements enhanced their position in the household. Mamluk women also gained status and influence because they legitimized the succession of men to power, particularly when the head of a household was killed or forced to retreat from Cairo in the numerous battles between competing Mamluk factions. In these cases, as al-Jabarti noticed about the Qazdughlis, the head of the victorious household quickly married the wife of the vanquished Mamluk and incorporated her into his household as a legal wife, thereby legitimizing his succession to or takeover of power. Women could amass large and lucrative estates of their own, which they carried with them from one household to another, and because of their longevity they became living symbols of lineage continuity. In various ways, women contributed to the stability and continuity of the household and the reproduction of its power from generation to generation. Thus gender not only inserts women into history but, in the case of the Mamluk women studied here, it also changes the way we view the history of the Mamluk revival.

Finally, my study of Mamluk women also uses comparative history in several ways. First, I am interested in how property rights or the lack of them affected women and their position within the family/household and in the wider society. Using the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to her family from Istanbul, I compare English common law in the eighteenth century to Islamic law to show that Muslim women who had the right to own property had advantages that English women, even aristocratic women like Lady Mary, did not have during the same time period.[27] Second, there are comparisons to be made between European societies and Mamluk Egypt where political power was fragmented and/or organized into powerful households rather than in centralized bureaucratic states. The work of Suzanne Wemple for medieval Europe, Sara Maza for the court of Louis XVI in prerevolutionary France, and Leslie Peirce for Ottoman women at the time of Sultan Suleiman demonstrates that women did better economically, socially, and politically when power was more loosely organized and that women in powerful households with sexual connections to the head of the household could accumulate wealth, achieve high status, influence in the social and cultural spheres, and even wield power in their own right.[28]

The Format of the Book

After two introductory chapters, one on the harem in history and the other on the history of the Mamluk revival, the chapters follow the stages of a woman's life and the transitions she makes as she becomes integrated into her household as a concubine and then a wife and into her neighborhood and the wider city of Cairo, and finally, how she lives her everyday life. The story begins in chapter 3, "Slaves in the Family," with the enslavement of women who were sold as concubines or wives for men in the Mamluk households. The chapter describes household slavery in Egypt and compares it to the chattel slavery in the U.S. southern states with a particular emphasis on the law regulating slavery and in particular concubinage. Chapter 4, "The Mamluk Household: How a House Became a Home," follows a concubine or wife into a Mamluk household. The chapter explains how and why the household became the foundation of Mamluk power and how the household as a political and military entity was also a home for Mamluk men and women. It also shows how the household provided women with the means to achieve wealth, status, and influence. Chapter 5, "Mamluk Women and the Egyptian Economy: A Comparative Perspective on Women's Property Rights," is devoted to women's property ownership and focuses on the estates they endowed as *waqf*s, the value and location of their property, and their stipulations for the use of the income from these properties. A comparative section in this chapter juxtaposes the life of Lady Mary living under English common law with the life of Mamluk women, who had considerable economic and legal autonomy under Islamic law. In chapter 6, "The City as Text: Space, Gender, and Power in Cairo," women are situated in the neighborhoods where Mamluks resided and in the wider city. The chapter shows how the Mamluk hierarchy was reproduced and reflected in the neighborhoods where they lived according to their rank within the system. It also shows women as out and abroad in the city and as participants in the life of the city. Turning to the home, chapter 7, "The Architecture of Seclusion: In Search of the Historical Harem," describes how the domestic architecture of Mamluk residences and architectural features such as the turned wood screens known as *mashrabiyya,* gave women access to most of the house. This chapter explains why the harem should

not be conceptualized solely as interior space that women could not leave but rather as an inscription on a woman's body whose movement through space inside and outside the house created the harem as a space that men could not violate. Chapter 8, "Everyday Life in the Harem," uses a variety of sources to describe what women's daily life was like and their lives as a wives, mothers, friends, and businesswomen. In chapter 9, "Changing the Subject: Gender and the History of the Mamluk Revival," the focus is on gendering the subject of Mamluk history to tell the story of the Mamluk resurgence with women rather than men as the historical subjects. The narrative is told through the lives of the three women mentioned above, Amina Khatun, Shawikar Qadin, and Nafisa al-Bayda. Finally, chapter 10 is an epilogue to bring the story of the harem into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by comparing the lives of two harem women, Nafisa al-Bayda and Huda Sha'rawi, the founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union. This chapter emphasizes the importance of historicizing the harem and paying attention to the economic, political, and cultural conditions that made the harems of the two women very different and contributed to the eventual disappearance of the harem among Egypt's elite.

PART ONE

The Harem in Theory, in Practice, and in the European Imagination

1

Reimagining the Harem

*From Orientalist Fantasies
to Historical Reconstruction*

Imaginative Geography and Western Representations of the Harem

Western travelers to Egypt in the eighteenth century believed they knew and could describe the locations of harems in the cities they visited, the women who lived in them, and the kinds of lives they led, even though most of the travelers, predominantly male, had almost certainly never been inside one. Without allowing the lack of firsthand knowledge to deter them, they confidently described the harems of Cairo, indeed of the entire Ottoman world, as virtual prisons where women were kept to satisfy the lusts of one man. The women themselves were reported by various travelers and memoirists to be submissive, not particularly beautiful, rather simple-minded, even childlike, and bored with their confinement.[1] Westerners could direct newcomers or their readers to the houses where harems were to be found, namely, the palaces of the Mamluk grandees and the wealthiest of the merchants. They could also identify the harem women when, like Sonnini, they encountered a group of veiled women, "taking an airing," protected by a eunuch.[2] Harem women were also spotted veiled and cloaked in the cemeteries on Fridays visiting their dead, on their way to the baths, in wedding processions, and on ritual visits to friends and relatives to celebrate a birth, for example. Sometimes their presence was noted even though the women themselves remained unseen, such as when they were sailing on one of several lakes (*birka*s) formed by the annual flooding of the Nile. Their boats were immediately identifiable because their upper deck was surrounded by

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the screens of turned wood called *mashrabiyya* that allowed the women inside to see their surroundings but prevented others from seeing them. Western travelers tended not to remark on the apparent contradiction between their description of harem women as virtual prisoners and their sightings of veiled, presumably secluded, women around the city.

Western images of the harem were constructed not only geographically as bounded spaces within the palaces of the grandees and the city's merchant elite but also imaginatively in the minds of Western men from which emerged highly sexualized images of women's lives and bodies. For Westerners, the harem was a trope that permitted unfavorable comparisons between the Orient and the West and validated their belief in the superiority of Western civilization. If the harem represented the unbridled sexuality of Oriental men expressed in sexual intercourse outside of marriage, polygamy, easy divorce, and the consequent degradation and oppression of women, then the West could congratulate itself for not having any harems. While the alleged sexual profligacy and moral laxity of the Orientals allowed Westerners to feel superior, it also inflamed the imagination of painters like Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Henri Matisse and writers like Gustave Flaubert, and inspired more than a dash of envy in Western males whose own sexuality was constrained by monogamy, Christian prohibitions against sex outside of marriage, and the near impossibility of divorce.[3]

One has only to read Flaubert's account of his travels in Egypt in 1849–50 and of his prodigious efforts to track down and have intercourse with the fabled dancer and courtesan Kuchuk Hanum to understand how the Orient of the Western imagination affected some men.[4] The dancers, called *'alma*s, lived in exile in the Upper Egyptian cities of Qena, Esna, and Aswan after Muhammad 'Ali Pasha issued an edict in 1834 that banished all female dancers and prostitutes from Cairo.[5] Flaubert found Kuchuk Hanum in Esna and described in sensuous detail Kuchuk's body as coffee-colored with rippling bronze ridges and apple-shaped breasts. When she danced, naked except for a scarf, Flaubert described her movements as sinuous and seductive, and he wrote that their sexual intercourse made him feel "like a tiger."[6] Later, when Flaubert's mistress, Louise Colet, who had read Flaubert's travel notes, wrote him an angry letter expressing her jealousy of the dancer, Flaubert responded with advice about understanding the Orient

and the Oriental woman: "The oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man. Smoking, going to the baths, painting her eyelids and drinking coffee—such is the circle of occupations within which her existence is confined. As for physical pleasure, it must be very slight, since the well-known button, the seat of same, is sliced off at an early age."[7]

Clearly, Flaubert makes no distinction between one "Oriental" woman and another, since his description mimics those of other travelers writing about harem women as decorative objects whose primary purpose was to satisfy men's sexual desires. Edward Said in *Orientalism* argued that Flaubert's encounter with Kuchuk Hanum is an almost perfect symbol of the Orientalist view of the Orient. Kuchuk Hanum, like the Orient, is passive, inarticulate, unable to represent herself, and subordinate. Said wrote, "My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West and the discourse about the Orient that enables it."[8] The dichotomy between West and East and the superiority over the East that the West claimed for itself was, according to Said, reflected in Flaubert's encounter with the Egyptian courtesan. Although Said was influenced by Michel Foucault and his writings on the relationship between power and knowledge, in the case of Kuchuk Hanum, Said failed to ask himself a crucial question: Why is the Orient represented by a woman?[9] The symbolic importance of Kuchuk Hanum in Orientalist discourse was only possible because she represented the inferior position of women in the European gender system. Otherwise, Kuchuk Hanum would have had no symbolic importance. By their alleged oppression and degradation within their society, Oriental women validated the European belief in the superiority of Western civilization and at the same time they were held in some measure responsible for the low state of Oriental civilization. Thus they bore a double burden as both cause and effect of Oriental decay and backwardness.

Upon his return to France, Flaubert wrote *Madame Bovary,* of whom he was reported to have said, "*Madame Bovary, c'est moi.*" According to Francis Steegmuller, Flaubert's visit to the Orient sensitized him to the male domination of women, and Emma, his creation, was Flaubert if he

had been born a woman.[10] However, Flaubert's empathy appears to have extended only as far as European women. Whatever Flaubert experienced in Egypt, it is clear that it inflamed his imagination and his passions. Did he see in his own creation, Emma Bovary, a similarity between the impulses that drove her to find sexual pleasure and excitement outside of her marriage to a rather dull, provincial doctor and those that drove him into the arms and the bed of an Egyptian courtesan?

In an insightful analysis of the nineteenth-century novel *Jane Eyre,* by Charlotte Brontë, Joyce Zonana showed how Brontë used Jane's relationship to Edward Rochester, her employer, and aspects of his behavior and personality to criticize what she saw as the detrimental influence of Oriental mores and customs on Western culture.[11] In the novel, Jane, an impoverished orphan with a cruel guardian, her Aunt Reed, became a teacher in order to support herself. She came to the home of Mr. Rochester as governess to his niece, Adele, and subsequently fell in love with him. Those feelings being mutual, Rochester asked Jane to marry him and she accepted. What she did not know was that the woman imprisoned on the top floor of the house and seemingly insane was Rochester's wife, Bertha Mason. If the marriage ceremony had not been interrupted by Bertha's brother, Richard, Jane would have become, although unknown to herself, Rochester's second wife in name if not in law. Among the most significant Orientalist images in the novel is Bertha's apartment on the top floor of the house that clearly stands in for the harem in which women were believed to be confined and separated from society. Rochester's intention to marry Jane is comparable either to polygamous marriage or to the right of men in Islamic law to have concubines, legally enslaved women with whom men were permitted to have sexual relations outside of the bonds of marriage. Rochester himself was prevented from divorcing his wife by law and convention, while men under Islamic law had the unilateral right to divorce and women had some rights to judicial divorce in all four schools of Islamic law. Like the real Flaubert, the fictional Rochester sought to find sexual pleasure and gratification outside of marriage and in disregard of both religion and social convention.

In a prefeminist world, Brontë had no language of female autonomy or theories of gender with which to criticize Jane's status within the household

or the imbalance in power between her and Rochester.[12] Brontë did not intend to challenge the social order by suggesting the need for egalitarian relations between the genders. In consequence, the critique of male-female relations was oblique and consisted of Jane's comparing Rochester's behavior to what she considered "Oriental" and, therefore, inferior. The implication was that what sullied male-female relationships and degraded women's position within the family was the infiltration into Western society of Oriental ideas and behavior, such as the seclusion of women in harems and polygamy. In order for women to reclaim a place of honor and respect within the family, men, as the head of the family, had to become more like themselves, that is, more Western. Deeply ingrained ideas about the Orient allowed Brontë to show how it was the slippage by men from Western codes of behavior that was responsible for the degradation of women, not the social order or convention. Brontë's novel demonstrates that the harem in the Western imaginary was self-reflexive; it revealed more about Western society than the one it purported to describe.

The historical harem, the one that women experienced in the premodern world, was different from the one imagined by Western travelers, artists, and writers of the period as a site of almost complete oppression. The Mamluk women of early modern Cairo were able to achieve real economic, social, and even political powers that belie Western representations of the harem. The lived or historical harem also challenges Western feminist theory that posits a link between emancipation and property ownership. Within the theoretical framework of Western feminism, it is impossible to reconcile the property ownership and legal rights of Muslim women with the oppression that Western feminist theory would argue flowed from the seclusion of women in the home. Historians have the tools in the variety of documents and artifacts from the material culture of the time to deconstruct the stereotypical harem and reimagine it as eighteenth-century women may have lived it.[13]

Theory and the Harem

The Islamic society that emerged in the seventh century CE (first century AH) was not the first to establish harems. Although the word *harem* comes

from the Arabic root *hrm,* meaning a sacred or forbidden place, harems existed in other places and at other times, even if they were not called that. A necessary first step toward understanding the harem is to remove it from the realm of myth and place it in the domain of history. When the harem is redefined as the linked practices of segregating the genders, secluding women, and veiling, it is clear that these practices existed in other societies including classical Athens—which has been regarded as the birthplace of Western civilization—Byzantium, and Muscovy as well as in the Mamluk society of eighteenth-century Egypt.

Conceptualizing the harem in this way allows us to see it not as uniquely Islamic or Middle Eastern but rather as the Middle Eastern form of a more general patriarchal practice. This way of understanding the harem broadens the context in which we consider it by allowing us to move away from the narrow question of whether the harem, like veiling, is Islamic in origin or religiously ordained. Locating the harem in various societies and cultures and recognizing the connections between them lead to the second step in historicizing the harem, which is to regard seclusion, gender segregation, and veiling as forms of male control over female sexuality and reproduction. This set of controls is an important part of a society's gender system because it places female sexuality under male authority and defines appropriate roles, identities, and behavior for men and women.

Gender is defined here as a socially constructed system that regulates social relations and is inseparable from social organizations. As Joan Scott has written, gender is based on perceived differences between the sexes and is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.[14] According to Scott, gender consists of a set of culturally available symbols and normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols. These concepts are expressed in institutions—religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political—and "typically take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine."[15]

Intrinsic to the gender systems that concern us here is the notion that it is appropriate to alienate women from their sexuality and place it under the control of men. In such a system, we can expect to see controls on female sexual autonomy expressed in various ways including gender segregation

and the seclusion of women. In a society that practices gender segregation, seclusion, and veiling, honor is valorized; men are seen as the protectors of the virginity and chastity of women, and women are believed to need the protection of men—fathers, husbands, and brothers. We should also expect to see these ideas legitimized ideologically, perhaps through religion, and institutionalized in politics, the law, and culture.

So, the questions that arise are: why do men appropriate women's sexuality and reproductive capacity and how does the prevailing gender system sustain these power relations between men and women? The historian Gerda Lerner, who studied the Ancient Near East between 3100 and 600 BCE, argued that men subjugated women and eventually were able to exclude them from public life by first taking control of women's sexuality and procreativity.[16] According to Lerner, since the second millennium BCE women had only minimal jurisdiction over their own sexuality even though some women managed to be economically independent and even to commandeer important positions in society. Men dominated women in this arena of life, and male control, cemented in law, was enforced by the power of the state.[17]

Controlling female sexuality and directing it toward unions approved by men were necessary for kinship society to arise, according to the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. His theories about how kinship systems emerged and a critical reading of his ideas by Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler are crucial to an understanding of how the harem and veiling act to control female sexuality and support the asymmetry of the prevailing gender system. In his *Elementary Structures of Kinship,* Lévi-Strauss contended that the incest taboo arose to ensure exogamous marriages, that is, marriage outside a certain family group.[18] To create these unions, men in different family groups exchanged women among themselves. As a result of this exchange of women, men forged strong bonds with each other and kinship society arose. Thus, according to Lévi-Strauss, the exchange of women is a fundamental principle of kinship society.

Gayle Rubin, in "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," argues that it follows then that female subordination is intrinsic to kinship societies since for a kinship system to arise, women first had to be deprived of a fundamental right, their right to themselves.[19] If

women are exchanged by men, then it is men (fathers, uncles, brothers) who have rights in their female kin and women who do not have full rights in themselves. The links between men resulted not only in the formation of a kinship system but also in a social organization that ordered the economic, political, and social life of the society. As the architects and beneficiaries of the social organization, men were empowered at the expense of women. For Rubin, the economic marginalization of women is derivative and secondary. In her view, women's subordination is the product of the relationships by which sex and gender are produced.[20]

As Rubin has written, "The 'exchange of women' is a seductive and powerful concept. It is attractive in that it places the oppression of women within social systems, rather than in biology. Moreover, it suggests that we look for the ultimate locus of women's oppression within the traffic in women, rather than within the traffic in merchandise."[21]

One of Rubin's theoretical insights is her identification of the sex-gender system in human society. By sex, we are to understand that humans are male or female biologically while gender is the system that transforms males and females into men and women. Gender is the socially imposed division of the sexes and the product of the social relations of sexuality. According to Rubin, "the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality."[22] In her words, individuals are engendered so that marriage can be guaranteed.[23]

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of Rubin's article and its continuing relevance in critiques and analyses of sex and gender, the binary opposites of gender's femininity and masculinity, the engendering of heterosexuality, and the link between gender and identity. This significance is evident in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* in which she acknowledges Rubin's essay as one of the most influential feminist critiques of Lévi-Strauss, Freud, and Lacan.[24] In *Gender Trouble,* Butler examines the problem of the incest taboo and critiques the idea that kinship society (Lévi-Strauss) and the Symbolic Order (Lacan) that arose from exogamy were heterosexual by biology/nature. Butler engages with the same theorists as Rubin, including Lévi-Strauss, Freud, and Lacan and also with the French feminists Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray to challenge certain assumptions underpinning the theorizing about kinship and

its origins. Butler's critique attacks the incest taboo (Lévi-Strauss) and the Oedipal crisis (Freud and Lacan) as fictive in order to undermine assumptions that sex and gender identities are naturally heterosexual. Basically, Lévi-Strauss, Freud, and Lacan posited that young boys, denied sexual access to their mother's body, were rewarded by access to the bodies of other women. Thus incest became taboo, exogamous marriages took place, and kinship society emerged. While Rubin was interested in showing how the exchange of women was responsible for women's subordination to men, Butler has challenged the supposed biological basis of heterosexuality.

Together, Butler and Rubin make us aware of how marriage and family enforce heterosexuality, and they also lead us to a fuller understanding of how and why sexuality is appropriated to ensure marriage, reproduction, and kinship. One of Rubin's major insights is that female sexuality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, had to be appropriated in order for the exchange of women to take place and exogamous marriages to occur. However, one can also argue that the sexuality of a homosexual man—as well as all women regardless of their sexuality—would also have to be appropriated by the males in his family group in order for him to become a partner in a heterosexual marriage. In most societies, men have had socially approved or even legal options for sexual relations outside of marriage, including taking concubines, mistresses, and multiple wives, facing less severe or no penalties for sex outside of marriage and, in Islamic society, having the legal prerogative to divorce. Also, men's bodies are not as regulated as women's bodies in terms of dress, movement, or sexuality. It is not the male gaze that has to be diverted, but rather it is the responsibility of women, by their clothing and modest demeanor, to deny the male gaze an object.

Although the Qur'an enjoins both men and women to be modest and to lower their gaze, women's dress and behavior are regulated much more closely.[25] Although both men and women are told to "lower their gaze and guard their modesty," women are told how to dress: "they should not display their beauty or their ornaments except what [must ordinarily] appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over the bosoms and not display their beauty" except to those men to whom they are closely related including their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, among others.[26] In other verses directed at the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an imposes a

social segregation on men and women by stating that women should remain behind a curtain when unrelated men are in the house and also says that it is better for them to stay in their houses and not "bedizen" themselves as women did in the time of ignorance *(jahiliyya)* before Islam.[27]

In Islamic society, the female body itself is regarded as a source of *fitna* (disorder), according to Fatna Sabbah. In her book *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious* she argued that Western and Eastern ideas of women's sexuality and sexual desires are different, with important implications for the control of women's bodies.[28] Sabbah contended that in Islamic societies there is a belief that women have very strong, possibly uncontrollable sexual desires and impulses. According to Sabbah, "Writers give many illustrations of the threat to the system represented by woman as a permanent pole of destabilization and subversion of the social hierarchy."[29] Fatima Mernissi contrasted the theories of sexuality of Freud with those of the twelfth-century Muslim scholar Imam al-Ghazali (1058–1111). Mernissi compared the passive, frigid Freudian female with al-Ghazali's sexually demanding female and commented on the man's social duty to satisfy her.[30] Mernissi noted, "The Ghazalian theory directly links the security of the social order to that of the woman's virtue, and thus to the satisfaction of her sexual needs. Social order is secured when the woman limits herself to her husband and does not create *fitna,* or chaos, by enticing other men to illicit intercourse."[31]

Therefore, in order to maintain social order, women should be married so that their sexual appetites can be satisfied within the bounds of a legitimate marriage. Islam sees marriage as the natural state for both men and woman, and some Muslim thinkers like Ghazali have argued that it is even more necessary for women than for men.[32] For the sake of social peace, women's bodies should be cloaked and veiled when they venture outdoors, marriageable women and men should be kept separate, and the best place for a woman was inside her home under the careful supervision of her father, brothers, or husband.

Since the harem and female seclusion are understood here as forms of control over female sexuality, we are led more or less directly to the importance of the body as a site of control and regulation. As Susan R. Bordo has argued, citing the anthropologist Mary Douglas, the body is "a powerful

symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body."[33] The body is not only a *text* for culture. It is also, as anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu and philosopher Michel Foucault (among others) have argued, a *practical,* direct locus of social control.[34] As Bordo has written, "Viewed historically, the discipline and normalization of the female body—perhaps the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and in different forms, across age, race, class, and sexual orientation—has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control."[35] The importance of a woman's body as both a cultural text and as a locus of control challenges conceptions of the harem as a virtual island of female space that women could not leave within the larger male space of the home. In fact, the harem did not contain or imprison women's bodies as much as women's bodies moving through interior or exterior space created a harem, or even a *haram,* of inviolable space around them that unrelated men could not penetrate. Defining the harem as exclusively interior space and prisonlike in its confinement contradicts evidence from various sources that women did leave their homes for a variety of purposes and had a high degree of physical autonomy both inside and outside the home. Thus we should conceptualize the harem as the linked practices of seclusion, gender segregation, and veiling that allowed women access to both interior and exterior space without violating social and gender norms of the time.

Although Western travelers saw and commented on the presence of women in the streets, in the cemeteries, or on boats on the Nile, the image of the sexually enslaved and secluded harem woman persisted in their writings. Some scholars of Ancient Greece and Byzantium used the image of Muslim women virtually imprisoned in their homes to argue that Greek and Byzantine women could not properly be described as "secluded" because they did in fact leave their homes. As Roger Just has pointed out,

> To try to determine whether or not Athenian women were secluded or segregated by whether or not they appeared outside their houses or talked to men is to adopt an extraordinarily simplistic criterion . . . Interestingly, for the most part it would be an inapplicable way of registering

female seclusion and segregation even in those Islamic or "oriental" societies which have been taken by classical scholars as the archetypical example of female confinement. It can be ensured by the constraints of a morality in terms of which the worlds of men and women are separate, divided by conceptual as much as physical boundaries, and in which the distance between men and women is measurable in terms of familiarity and "respect" as much as in terms of physical proximity.[36]

The debate over Athenian women highlights the imprecise way that the concept and practice of female seclusion has been described and discussed. The apparent contradiction between ideas of the harem as the complete seclusion of females and the presence of these so-called secluded women outside their homes arises from the misperception of the harem as a rigidly defined inside space within the home that women could not leave. In fact, as we shall see, women not only were able to leave their homes but were able to move freely about the house without encountering men not related to them. In order to resolve the apparent contradiction between female seclusion and female autonomy of movement, the harem should not be conceptualized as a separate and distinct area for women inside a larger space to which they did not have access, like a female island in a male sea. Rather, instead of an exclusively inside space with rigid and impermeable borders, we should see it as an inscription on a woman's body whose movement through space created around her a zone of inviolability. Instead of a space that women could not leave, the harem was a space that men could not enter both inside and outside the house.

Inside the house, women achieved freedom of movement because houses were designed to prevent accidental encounters between the women of the house and unrelated men. Outside the house, the veil served also to prevent men from approaching women on the street. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the intrepid Englishwoman who lived in Istanbul in the early eighteenth century, observed that veiling gave Turkish women the ability to conduct extramarital affairs since no man could address a veiled woman on the street, not even a husband who suspected that the woman under the veil and concealing cloak was his wife.[37] Lady Mary went so far as to

describe Ottoman Turkish women as the only free peoples in the universe, chiefly because of their property rights.[38] Her observations were not only at odds with the male travel writers of the period, they contradicted deeply ingrained ideas about the abject status of harem women.

Although these forms of social control existed in various societies historically, gender segregation and the seclusion of women were not the sole determinants of women's status. Thus a final step toward a fuller understanding of the harem is the deconstruction of the Orientalist view that women's lives were determined solely by their virtual imprisonment in the harem and their sexual availability. What follows from this view is the one-dimensional image of Eastern women as oppressed and degraded sex objects. Indeed, the odalisque of the Western imagination seems to have been representative of all Oriental women even though seclusion was only common among the society's political, religious, and commercial elite. Peasant women and lower-class urban women did not veil, and they were not secluded, usually because their labor in the fields and in shops and workshops was necessary to the family's survival. Seclusion was the prerogative of the elite because only the wealthy could afford to keep their women economically inactive and to maintain the large houses with separate living and entertaining quarters for men and women. While Muslims of all classes preferred to keep marriageable men and women separate, those in the lower classes could not do this by creating separate quarters for the two genders. For lower-class urban families in the cramped *rab*'s, or tenements, the *mastaba,* or bench outside the building, became a meeting place for men. When an unrelated man had to enter an apartment, the women of the family retired to an interior room. While the harem was a mark of elite status, wealth, and privilege, women's status in all classes also flowed from the rights they enjoyed as Muslim women under the law, including their legal personhood and their property rights. These are rights that European and American women did not enjoy until the late nineteenth century. A study of other societies across time and place where gender segregation and seclusion were practiced demonstrates that women's lives were more complex than the essentialist views of Western travelers and writers conveyed.

Historicizing the Harem

The apparent need by some scholars to distance Ancient Greece, regarded as the foundation of Western civilization, from any connection to the harems of the Orient emphasizes the way that the seclusion of women has served not only as a marker of women's low status but also as a sign of social and cultural degradation. Nevertheless, societies that were as different culturally and as separated geographically and historically as Classical Athens, Byzantium, Medieval Muscovy, and the Middle East before the modern period did practice gender segregation and female seclusion. The characteristics of seclusion were remarkably similar in all of these societies from the location of the women's quarters within the home to the flexibility of seclusion that allowed women to manage their homes and to leave them on certain occasions such as religious celebrations, weddings and funerals, and visits to family and friends and to the baths. In each of these societies, another similarity was that the practice of female seclusion was one of a set of constraints on women's sexuality and sexual autonomy legitimized by law and/or religion and embedded in social norms and culture. Generally, these constraints aimed to ensure legitimate offspring and were linked to the inheritance of status, rights, and property.

In Classical Athens, women, including those in citizen families, had no rights, yet they were crucial conduits in the passage of rights to property and to citizenship to their heirs and were indispensable in the reproduction of the social order. However, as nonpersons legally, women could not enter into any contact, including the marriage contract, which was arranged by a woman's guardian *(kyrios)*, including her father, husband, or another male relative. They could not directly inherit property and had no legal rights to the dowry, which went directly from the bride's father to her husband. Women could not hold office, vote, or server as jurors. They could not speak in the citizens' assembly *(ekklesia)* or attend its meetings. Legally, they were never fully adults since they had to be perpetually under the supervision of a male guardian. They could not assert their own rights nor act as adult individuals of any legal consequence. As Sue Blundell has noted, when a woman was married, she passed from the guardianship of her father to that of her husband. Legally an Athenian female remained a

minor for the whole of her life. Even after the death of her husband, a male guardian would be responsible for her, either her eldest son, if he was over eighteen, or her father or another next-of-kin adult male.[39]

According to Blundell, Athenian women veiled when outside of the home or in the company of unrelated males either by covering their heads with their cloaks or by draping a separate veil over their heads and sometimes their faces. However, there do not seem to have been hard and fast rules about how or when to veil.[40]

Yet women were absolutely vital to the social reproduction of the Athenian elite because citizenship was inherited and political and property rights were tied to citizen status. Under the citizenship laws of the fifth century, a male Athenian's citizenship depended on his being the son of a citizen father and an Athenian mother who was married in the legally recognized way *(enque)* that made her children legitimate. Therefore, Athenian women have been described as "channels through which economic, religious, and most important, political rights were transferred and transmitted between men."[41]

J. P. Gould has noticed the connection between the formal rules governing the treatment of women and those governing the transmission and inheritance of property:

> It is thus in their role as transmitters of property that the community displays concern for and extends protection to its women, and expresses such concern and protection within its formal legal rules and institutions. The way in which it does so defines the woman as incapable of a self-determined act, as almost in law an un-person, outside the limits of those who constitute society's responsible and representative agents; and yet, at the same time, as precious and essential to the maintenance of a continuing social order and in particular to the continuity of property.[42]

While women in Classical Athens were deprived of rights and were legally nonpersons, in Islamic societies where gender segregation and female seclusion were practiced, women were legal persons and had property and other rights. In these two societies, the Islamic and the Athenian, the seclusion of women existed with and without legal rights for women.

Thus the simplistic equating of seclusion with the oppression of women and absence of legal rights should be rejected on the basis of historical evidence to the contrary.

The similarity between Classical Athens, Muscovy, Byzantium, and Mamluk Egypt is not that they all had harems or that all harems were alike but rather that female seclusion was considered essential to the maintenance of the social order, which required legal marriages—or at least legally recognized sexual unions with concubines—and the orderly and legal transmission of status and property to legitimate heirs. Separating marriageable men and women from each other and secluding marriageable and married women were ways to ensure virginity before marriage and marital fidelity after marriage. Women's sexual autonomy was constrained as was the choice of marriage partners in order to direct women to approved unions that would ensure continuity of the royal or aristocratic lineage or strengthen the economic and/or political power of the family.

In her work on Medieval Muscovy, where the harem was called the *terem,* Nancy Shields Kollman has observed that "in societies that practice segregation and seclusion, women's fundamental value is associated with their marriageability and procreative capability. Seclusion allows control over a woman's marriage choices and protects her value as a marriage partner, since it assures her husband's family that her issue represents her bloodline. Arranged marriages allow a male-dominated society to manipulate the politics and economy of the family very effectively."[43] Kollman has concluded that the seclusion of elite women was closely linked to the proper functioning of a political system that heavily emphasized kin and marriage and thus served the needs of the emerging royal autocracy and *boyar* elite. In Byzantium by the ninth century, there were similar imperatives that resulted in restrictions on the movement and choices of royal and aristocratic women. There were separate apartments for women in the houses of the elite. The Byzantine empress lived with her court in a separate residence within the Great Palace called the Pantheon. The empress attended official functions held in the palace but seldom took part in state processions or public festivities. Princesses were valued as brides in political marriages. According to Tamara Talbot Rice, "All women, including the empress, had to cover their faces with a veil when they went out. They were not allowed to

appear in processions, and few entered the reception rooms in their homes when their husbands were entertaining male guests. No men other than members of the family were allowed to enter the women's apartments. Both at court and among the rich, eunuchs, many of them from the Caucasus, were employed to guard the women's quarters. Women in wealthy families had an attendant to accompany them when they went out."[44] In all of the societies discussed here, women left their homes for many of the same reasons, such as religious services or holidays. In Athens, for example, women held more than forty priesthoods and participated in the great women's festival of the Thesmophoria dedicated to Demeter. The Byzantine empress attended church services regularly but sat apart from the emperor in the gallery. Women also visited family and friends, particularly on occasions such as the birth of a child, attended weddings and funerals, and visited the baths, which were also social occasions for women. Lady Mary, who visited a women's bath on her way to Istanbul, where her husband was taking up his post as English ambassador to the Sublime Porte, described the bath as the female equivalent of the men's coffeehouse.[45] Mamluk women in Egypt also left their homes for many of the same reasons as those cited above. In addition, they also used their legal rights to make contracts and own property by investing in Cairo's commercial economy and amassing large estates of income-producing property. Mamluk women's economic activity gave a public role as economic actors to allegedly private women secluded in their homes.

One of the most striking similarities between Mamluk women and women in other societies practicing forms of seclusion is the design of the homes in which they lived. In Athens and in Mamluk Egypt, the location of the women's quarters was chosen in order to give women the freedom they needed to move around the house while keeping them separated from men who were not their kin. In Athens, the women's quarters of the home, called the *gynaeceum,* was in an internal part of the house without direct access to the streets. If the house had two stories, the women and female slaves usually inhabited the upper story. On the basis of anthropological evidence, it appears that even though the gynaeceum was on the second floor, women had access to the first floor where the well, kitchen, storerooms, workrooms, and so forth were located. It should not be surprising

that women had access to most parts of the house, since women were responsible for its management, and the home was the center of production of clothing and food. In the Dema House of Ano Liossia, north of Athens, which seems to have been occupied by a well-to-do family in the late fifth century, the *andron,* or men's dining room, was located at the back of the ground floor courtyard. Also on the ground floor but on the other side and at the farthest possible point away from the *andron,* there was a room with a hearth and a workroom in which traces of a staircase to the upper story were found. Susan Walks contends that the house was designed to prevent unsupervised meetings between women and men who were not their kinsmen in the least secure parts of the house such as the entrance from the street and the *andron.*[46]

In Mamluk Egypt, the houses of the grandees had similar characteristics and guiding principles, namely to prevent unrelated men and women from encountering each other in the house while at the same time allowing women to have relatively unimpeded access to most of the house. Sometimes the women's section of a large house or palace was reached by the so-called bent entrance, which took a sharp and unexpected right-angled turn, and alerted the visitor to the fact that he or she was entering the *haramlik,* the Ottoman term by which the harem was known. The women's quarters, which were also the family's quarters and the center of family life, were on the second floor of the house. But women also had access to most of the rest of the house through a combination of design and architectonics that alerted those inside to the presence of women. The most important of these devices was *mashrabiyya,* the screens of turned wood that allowed a woman to see out but prevented others from seeing in. *Mashrabiyya* on the windows of a home's second floor signaled the location of the women's quarters of the dwelling.

Placed strategically around the inside of the house, they allowed a woman to move freely around her home. *Mashrabiyya* also screened the cabins on boats that women sailed on the Nile or on the lakes or *birka*s that filled with the yearly inundation of the river's floodwaters. As a screening device, *mashrabiyya* inside the house acted like the veil outside the house to allow women a greater degree of autonomy and freedom of movement.

2. Window box screened in *mashrabiyya* overlooking the courtyard of the Musafirkhana Palace.

Another of the similarities that the societies studied here share is the social need to restrict and control women's sexual autonomy through a variety of social practices including segregation of the genders and the seclusion of women. However, these practices should not be viewed as constructing virtual prisons for women that prevented them from participating in the social, economic, and religious life of their societies. Spatial arrangements inside the house should be regarded as allowing women freedom of movement while safeguarding the women of the house from encounters with unrelated men, as Athenian and Cairene dwellings demonstrate.

Although the Orientalist representation of the harem is highly sexualized and focused on the sexual availability of the women who lived in it, sexual arrangements could be said to rest on what is denied rather than what is available. In other words, the social order as represented by the harem and veiling denied women the right to sexual autonomy while the master/husband denied other men access to the women in his household. Seen from this perspective, we have a more inclusive view of gender segregation

and seclusion as important components of the gender system that not only maintained the asymmetry of power between men and women but also the hierarchical relations between men.

A comparative analysis of the harem also shows that the lives of elite women were more complex than the image of the odalisque suggests. In Athens, women were crucial to the biological and social reproduction of the family, which was the basis of political and economic power. Although Athenian women had no rights to property or to citizenship, these rights flowed through her to her sons. In Egypt and Byzantium, women were important to the marriage alliances that created ruling-class solidarity. In Egypt, women owned and managed considerable income-producing property and created large patronage networks of their own. In both Byzantium and Egypt, women appeared to have considerable physical mobility. In Cairo, for example, a woman could be away from her home for days at a time visiting family and friends.

Although an analysis of women's lives in societies that practiced gender segregation and seclusion reveals that women's lives were richer than the one-dimensional portrait of harem women as odalisques, the harem was not peripheral or unimportant. It was an important component of the gender system that helped to maintain the asymmetry in power between men and women and between men and men, and it was one of the factors to be considered when assessing the overall status and position of women.

Conclusion

History, especially comparative history, and theory can be very useful in deconstructing the Orientalist stereotypes of Muslim women found in the travel writings of eighteenth-century Europeans. Without direct access to elite women or their households and with little knowledge of Islam, they nevertheless wrote with certainty about the dismal lives of women and the tyranny of their masters.

Theories related to gender and sexuality have a great deal of explanatory power for Mamluk society of the eighteenth century and can help in the search for the historical harem. Rather than identifying the harem or female seclusion as an example of Islamic exceptionalism, we can understand it as

the Middle Eastern form of a more general patriarchal practice, namely male control of sexuality and thus biological reproduction. This control by males over their females' choice of marriage or sexual partner has been traced by Lerner to the beginnings of civilization in ancient Mesopotamia. Gender segregation, female seclusion in the home, and veiling were practiced not only in the Islamic Mediterranean but before that, in ancient Greece and Byzantium. The point to be made here is not that all harems are alike but rather that one of the characteristics of ancient and early modern society has been male control of female sexuality by various means.

In ancient Greece, for example, the male guardian chose the marriage partner of his female dependent in order to ensure the transfer of property and citizenship through her to her sons. As both father and husband, he was also supposed to safeguard his daughter's virginity before marriage and his wife's fidelity after marriage. In the Mamluk society of the eighteenth century, the heads of Mamluk households had a strategy for reproducing and expanding their power by arranging unions between their male and female slaves, either through marriage or concubinage. As we shall see in chapter 4, the Mamluk household was the foundation of Mamluk power, and marriages within and across households created alliances and kin relations that not only expanded the power of the households involved but also made the system as a whole more cohesive. Thus the sexual politics of Mamluk Egypt was based on the male appropriation of female sexuality to achieve various political ends.

Comparative history allows us to see the similarities in the status and treatment of women in various societies and also the differences. Unlike women in Byzantium or ancient Greece, for example, Mamluk women as Muslims possessed and exercised the rights that the Qur'an and Islamic law gave to women, including the right to own property and their legal personhood. Thus the apparent paradox, at least in the West, of harem women owning property unravels in the face of historical and legal evidence of women's empowerment.

The Mamluk system was a gendered system in which there was an asymmetry of power between men and women. Mamluk men reproduced their power and dominance in various ways. In the Mamluk system, the path to power and great wealth was through the *beylicate* and the officer

corps, from which women were barred, and through the tax farms and salaries that accompanied positions in the Mamluk hierarchy. Mamluks also maintained gender hierarchy by curtailing women's sexual autonomy through the selection of their sexual partners and by circumscribing their physical movements. In this way, Mamluks ensured that concubinage and marriage served the political goals of enhancing and reproducing the power of their households. However, women were not without some power and influence in their households, alternative avenues to advancement and wealth, autonomy in spheres other than the sexual, and most important, legal rights. For women, rank, status, and wealth were linked to their position in the households, to their roles as concubines and wives, and to their rights as Muslim women according to the Qur'an. These included the right to a dowry *(mahr)* upon marriage, the right to own and dispose of property, and the personal status rights enjoyed by Muslim women related to maintenance, divorce, guardianship of children, and inheritance. As slave women who converted to Islam upon manumission and marriage, Mamluk women enjoyed the same rights that the Qur'an and the law gave to freeborn Muslim women.

2

Egypt in the Eighteenth Century

The Transition from the Medieval to the Early Modern

The period between 1260 and the Ottoman conquest of 1516–17 was the era of the Mamluk sultanate that began when the slave soldiers of Egypt stopped the advance of the seemingly invincible Mongols across the eastern Mediterranean. After more than 250 years as an independent sultanate ruling a territory that stretched into Syria and the Hijaz, the Ottoman victory of the early sixteenth century reduced Mamluk Egypt to the status of a province. However, Mamluk power was never completely extirpated from Egypt, and Mamluk houses eventually reemerged and challenged the central Ottoman administration for hegemony in Egypt. The resurgent Mamluks of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century organized themselves into households that served as the foundation of their power as they usurped tax revenues destined for the Ottoman treasury and contested with each other for control of the rural and urban tax farms.

Because the Mamluk household was based on lineage and kinship, although mostly fictive, women as concubines and wives played an important role in ensuring the household's maintenance and reproduction of power, particularly through alliance-building and kinship construction inside and across households. Thus the harem should be regarded a key component of the political household system constructed by the Mamluks because it facilitated control of women's sexuality and the creation of alliances through marriages and concubinage that enhanced the power of the household. The women of the Mamluk households were privileged not only by their relationships with the men who led the powerful households of the

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eighteenth century but also by the property rights that Islam grants Muslim women. Women, like men, were able to exercise these rights and even amass large estates because of the commercial economy of the period and Egypt's place as an entrepôt in a global system of trade and manufacturing. The prevailing gender system of the eighteenth century and of the Mamluks reserved to men positions within the Mamluk fighting forces and the administrative apparatus as well as the agricultural and commercial tax farms. However, women were able to find lucrative investment opportunities in Cairo's commercial and residential economy such as the *wakala*s that combined shops, artisanal workshops, warehouses, and living quarters in one structure as well as a variety of residences including the tenements (*rab*'s) that housed the city's workers and artisans. Thus the political economy of Mamluk Egypt has to be regarded as one of the factors contributing to the wealth and status of women in the Mamluk households. The Mamluk household became the foundation of Mamluk power in Egypt, and for women, the path to high status, wealth, influence, and, in certain circumstances, even power.

The Mamluk Sultanate and the Resurgence of Mamluk Power

The Mamluk system of Egypt was an heir to the practice of enslaving non-Muslims and, after a period of training, manumitting them after conversion to Islam. In so doing, the goal was to create a loyal cadre of soldiers and household retainers for the Abbasid caliphs of the ninth century. Originating as a military force loyal to the governor of the province of Egypt, the Mamluks, under their commander Baybars, defeated the Mongols in 1260 at Ayn Jalut in Palestine and stopped their advance across the eastern Mediterranean. Under Baybars, the first sultan, the Mamluks took power in Egypt and eventually extended their sovereignty into Greater Syria and the Red Sea coast of Arabia where the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina are located. The creation of the Mamluk sultanate with its capital at Cairo filled a power vacuum in the region created by the Mongol conquest of Iraq, the fall of the Abbasid empire, and the execution of the last caliph. Mamluks of Turkish origin, like Baybars, founded the sultanate and ruled as the Bahri dynasty until the end of the fourteenth century. The designation

"Bahri," or island, came from the fact that the barracks of the soldiers was on Rawda Island in the Nile. The Bahri Mamluks were succeeded by the Burji Mamluks based at the Citadel who were of Circassian origin and who firmly established the principle of nonhereditary succession. The independent sultanate ended when the Ottoman Turks defeated the Egyptian Mamluks in 1516–17. Although the conquest transformed Egypt into an imperial province, the Ottomans did not succeed in extirpating the Mamluk system from the country. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Mamluk system began to reassert itself and to challenge a weakening imperial government.

P. M. Holt has argued that the Ottoman conquest should not be seen as a war of Ottomans against Mamluks because the Ottoman forces under Sultan Selim made an alliance with a Mamluk faction headed by Kha'ir Bey, the Mamluk governor of Syria who went over to the Ottomans. Rather, the conflict should be seen as one between the Ottomans and their Mamluk allies against another Mamluk faction led by the Mamluk sultan Tuman Bey. In allying with one group of Mamluks against the other, Sultan Selim committed the Porte to the maintenance of a Mamluk faction in Egypt.[1] "From this it follows that the campaign of 1516–17 cannot be regarded as a simple clash between Ottomans and Mamluks, in which Selim sought the total defeat of his opponents. By allying himself with one Mamluk faction against the other, Selim committed himself to the maintenance of Mamluk recruitment and the Mamluk elite as such: not surprisingly he appears in late chronicles as a heroic figure, the patron and protector of Mamluk chivalry."[2]

The institution that served as a springboard to Mamluk control of the Ottoman administration was the *sanjakiyya*. After the Ottoman conquest, the sultan created twenty-four *sanjak beys* to assist the governor in his administration of the province. In Ottoman usage, the commander of an Ottoman military district was referred to as a *sanjak bey* because of the *sanjak*, or banner, he carried to identify his rank. In Egypt, they were called in Arabic *amir* or *mir al-liwa al-sharif al-sultani*. The district he commanded was called a *sanjak* or a *liwa*. Thus, "bey" indicated rank and position within the Ottoman administration of Egypt while "amir" was the title assumed by the beys. For example, one of the most powerful

of the eighteenth-century Mamluks was called this way: Al-Amir 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, a name that included his rank and title. The *sanjak bey*s in Egypt, unlike those in other Ottoman provinces, were salaried officers and not holders of landed estates and thus did not form part of the truly Ottoman administration and military system. According to Holt, this system worked to the advantage of the Mamluks as the Ottoman system became more rigid and weaker in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[3]

To defend their administration in Egypt and carry out their objectives, the Ottomans established a military garrison of Ottoman troops consti-tuted in seven corps, or *ojaq*s, including the Mustahfizan (Guardians, as the Janisarries were known in Egypt), 'Azaban (Bachelors), Mutafarriqa (personal corps of the governor), Gawishan (Messengers), Gonulluyan (Vol-unteers, known in Egypt as the Gamaliyan or Cameliers), Tefenkjiyan (Rifle-men), and Gerakisiyya (Circassians). From the beginning, there were revolts against Ottoman authority, including one in 1523–24 of the Ottoman vice-roy and the Mamluks, which was put down by Ottoman loyalists. As a result, in 1525, the Ottoman grand vezir, Ibrahim Pasha, arrived in Egypt to reimpose Ottoman authority. His visit led to the proclamation of the Qanunname, the edict that codified the administrative practices in Egypt.

The period from the last quarter of the sixteenth century to the first decade of the eighteenth was marked by internal conflict, the decline in the strength and quality of the Ottoman administration, and the rise of the beylicate, the institutional heirs to the Mamluk sultanate. The spo-radic revolts of the Ottoman military units caused the Ottoman governors to seek the assistance of the Mamluk beys, thus paving the way for the reemergence of Mamluk power in Egypt.[4] In 1586, local forces tried for the first time to remove the Ottoman viceroy from office. In 1605, rebel troops killed the viceroy and displayed his head on the Bab Zuwayla gate, not incidentally where the victorious Ottomans had hanged the last Mam-luk sultan, Tuman Bey, in 1517. The year 1623 marked a turning point in Ottoman-Mamluk relations because the beys, who had previously been supporters of legitimate authority, joined with the troops to refuse recogni-tion to the designated viceroy. In 1631, the Mamluk beys took the initiative and with the officer corps offered collective resistance to the viceroy and invested a bey as acting viceroy *(qa'im maqam)*. The sultan's government

confirmed the action of the beys, thereby establishing a precedent that in the next century became a prescriptive right to suspend a viceroy and transfer his powers temporarily to one of their own.[5]

By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the beys had acquired the major administrative positions in the Ottoman hierarchy. According to Stanford J. Shaw, 1671 was the last year in which officials sent from the Porte held effective power in the major administrative positions in the Ottoman hierarchy.[6] These included the treasurer *(daftardar)*, the acting viceroy *(qa'im maqam),* the leader of the annual pilgrimage or *haj* to Mecca *(amir al-haj)*, and his commander of the troops *(sirdar)*, the leader of the entourage taking the annual tax payment to Istanbul *(sirdar al-khaznah)*, the leader of the troops sent annually by Egypt to Istanbul for assignment to service outside of Egypt *(sirdar al-safar)*, and the commander of small forts and police posts at Cairo, Bulaq, and Old Cairo *(sirdar al-quluq)*.[7] The Qanunname of 1525 had allocated all the provincial governorships to Mamluks known as *kashif*s, and the Mamluk beys eventually exerted their dominance over the subprovincial officials as well. The *kashif*s were themselves amirs who were the most favored freed slaves of their masters and were expected to take their master's place in the beylicate.

At the same time as the beys were asserting control over the Ottoman administration, they were also gaining control of the revenues from the agricultural land. Shaw and Piterberg link the resurgence of the Mamluks and the rise of the beylicate to conditions prevailing in the wider empire, particularly changes in the land tenure system.[8] As Piterberg has pointed out, while these changes led to the rise in the other Arab provinces of the *a'yan* (local notables), who were not of slave origin, they led to the resurgence of the Mamluk system based on the recruitment of slaves into the households of the amirs.

During the period of the sultanate, land was divided into *iqta'*s, later called *muqata'*s, which were retained after the Ottoman conquest, but the feudal system by which the Mamluks held these agricultural units was abandoned. According to Shaw, the Ottomans were transforming the landholding system in the empire for a variety of reasons including the declining importance of the feudal cavalry and their replacement with the Janissaries, a salaried infantry and artillery corps, and the increasing ability of the

empire to administer sources of revenue directly. In addition, Sultan Selim was especially motivated to end the fief system in Egypt in order to destroy the financial power of the surviving Mamluks and to prevent the Ottoman troops and officials in the country from building up local power.[9]

Thus, after the conquest, the Mamluks who acknowledged the sultan's authority and entered into his service were given a salary. For agricultural tax collection, the Porte moved to a system in which salaried officials of the state called *emin*s were charged with collecting the agricultural taxes on the *muqat'a*s and sending the tax revenues directly to the Ottoman treasury. The system, known as the *emanet*, eventually failed for a number of reasons. There were not enough men willing to take the posts at a time when inflation was making salaried positions less attractive, and since salaries were not linked to the revenues collected, there was not much incentive for the agents to be thorough and efficient. The shortage of *emin*s forced the Ottoman treasury to give more than one *muqata'* to each *emin* or tax collector. Since the *emin*s could not take care of multiple *muqata'*s, the *emin*s began hiring agents called *'amil*s who were drawn from the only available source, the Mamluks. In effect, the system of salaried agents gave way to a system of tax farming dominated by the Mamluks. As tax farmers, or *multazim,* the Mamluks paid fixed annual sums to the *emin*s and kept the balance for themselves.[10] As Shaw has pointed out, tax farms were not the result of conscious government policy but emerged as a result of necessity: "This process went on through the first half of the seventeenth century and was both cause and manifestation of the process by which Mamluk houses were formed and rose to political power. For all practical purposes, it was complete by 1671, the last year in which officials from the Porte held effective power in the major administrative positions of the Ottoman hierarchy in Egypt."[11]

Ironically, the Ottomans provided the institutional basis in the *sanjakiyya* for the revival of Mamluk power in Egypt. The decentralization of Ottoman power, the rise of local notables, or *'ayan*s, changes in the land tenure and tax collection systems, the inflationary pressures of the sixteenth century, which had negative effects on salaried government officials including an increasingly mutinous military corps—all of these benefited

the Mamluks who institutionally were heirs to the Mamluk amirs of the sultanate. Whereas in other parts of the empire, local notables of nonslave origin arose as power centers, in Egypt the Mamluks were the best placed to expand their power at the expense of the Ottoman administration. Their increasing control of tax revenues allowed the beys to expand their households through slavery and thus to provide the armed force needed to defend themselves and attack their rivals.

The two most important households in the seventeenth century were part of the beylicate, those Mamluks who began as salaried officials of the Porte, acquired the major positions in the Ottoman administrative hierarchy, and took control of agricultural tax revenues. The power of the beys was centered in their *bayt,* or house, that individually and collectively became the locus of power during the Mamluk resurgence. The two leading households were the Faqariyya and the Qasimiyya, founded by Dhu al-Faqar Bey and Qasim Bey, respectively. The Qazdughli *bayt,* which would dominate so much of the eighteenth century, was founded by Mustafa Katkhuda, who rose to *agha,* or commander, of the Janissaries before his death in 1703–4. In 1711 there was a civil war involving the Ottomans, various Mamluk factions, and the Janissary and 'Azaban corps that would lead eventually to the rise of the Qazdughli household and the expansion of its power from the Janissary corps to the beylicate. As Holt has noted, before the "Great Insurrection," the beys and high officers of the seven corps were of equal importance. However, after that, power shifted to the grandees or the beylicate and in particular to the Qazdughli household.[12]

The rivalry between the Qasimiyya and the Faqariyya ended with the defeat of the former through an alliance between the Faqari and the Qazdughli houses. In 1739, the last Faqari amir, 'Uthman Bey, was driven from power by an alliance between Ibrahim Katkhuda, head of the Janissaries, and his partner in a duumvirate, Ridwan Katkhuda 'Azaban, head of the Julfiyya *bayt*. It was Ibrahim Katkhuda who, between 1748 and his death in 1754, laid the foundations of Qazdughli power for the rest of the century. By the mid-eighteenth century after a series of bloody battles among the various Mamluk households, the Qazdughli household *(bayt)* emerged as the most powerful. Ibrahim Katkhuda, who expanded the power of the

Qazdughlis by placing his *mamluk*s in the beylicate, began the process of fusing the military institution founded on the regiments (*ojaq*s) and the Mamluk organization dominated by the beylicate.

Michael Winter has noted that the weakening of the regiments began in the eighteenth century when the Mamluk amirs placed their own *mamluk*s in positions of influence so that the distinction between the regiments and the beys with their private armies disappeared. Winter argues that the decline of the *ojaq*s was nearly complete by 1754 when the reign of Ibrahim Katkhuda and Ridwan Katkhuda ended and only the Mamluks with their militant political culture were significant militarily and politically.[13] The result was one system in which service in the regiments or the beylicate became career paths within a unified, revived Mamluk system. As André Raymond has pointed out, by the end of the century almost all the positions in the Ottoman hierarchy were held by members of the Mamluk households.[14] In 1798, Ibrahim Bey described the ruling class as a unique system in which the beys, *kashif*s, *mamluk*s, and officers and soldiers of the regiments constituted a socially homogenous and hierarchical group.[15] Daniel Crecelius described the administration of Egypt as "an Ottoman-Mamluk condominium."[16] He noted that "the struggle between mamluks and the Ottomans for control of the administration, and hence the revenues of Egypt and the competition for control of the beylicate course through the history of the eighteenth century."[17]

'Ali Bey al-Kabir, who dominated the Mamluk system between the 1760s and his death in 1773, was Ibrahim Katkhuda's favorite *mamluk* and was trained in his household. 'Ali Bey was successful in consolidating power in the Qazdughli household and transforming the Mamluk system from one in which the most powerful amir was primus inter pares, or the first among equals, to a quasi-monarchical one in which power was concentrated in one house under one head. He was unsuccessful, however, in his attempt to detach Egypt from the Ottoman Empire and died in the attempt. His successors, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, Murad Bey, and Ibrahim Bey, did not confront the Porte directly but rather maintained Egypt's autonomy by withholding tax payments and keeping a grip on the administration and sources of revenue.

The Political Economy of Mamluk Egypt

The ascendancy of the beylicate and the consolidation of power in one household was due in part to changes in the global economy, which affected Egypt's position as an entrepôt in the East-West trade, and to the conquest of 1516–17 that made Egypt part of the largest imperial economy since the Roman Empire. Egypt's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia contributed to its domination of the East-West transit trade through the period of the Mamluk sultanate. The appearance of Europeans in the Indian Ocean in the late fifteenth century gradually reduced Egypt's share of the trade in spices, textiles, and luxury goods. However, integration into the Ottoman Empire compensated for the decline in Indian Ocean trade by opening new markets for the spices and luxury goods from the East. The empire's control of the Muslim ports of the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, and certain strategic ports of the Red Sea like the Hijaz and the Yemen meant that while European nations were trading directly with India and Persia, Egypt still provided goods from the East to North Africa and Turkey. As Nelly Hanna has observed, "In other words, neither the circumnavigation of Africa nor the conquest of 1517 interrupted the external trade relations of Egypt. Whereas in the Mamluk period, Bulaq had handled essentially the luxury goods of the East-West transit trade, in the Ottoman period, it came to deal more and more with everyday items like linen, rice, cereals, leather and sugar."[18]

Trade was always important not only to the merchants but also to the state. The state made large benefits from the transit trade in the form of taxes collected upon the entrance and exit of goods.[19] During the period of the Mamluk sultanate, Sultan Barsbay needed large sums to pay state expenses and his troops, so he declared a monopoly on the pepper trade from India via Jedda and eventually extended the monopoly to other commodities, thereby excluding the so-called Karimi merchants who had dominated the trade from the East.[20] During the period of the Mamluk resurgence, there were close ties between the Mamluks and the merchants who had shared interests in Egypt's commercial sector and whom the Mamluks could coerce for loans or exactions to help pay their expenses. One of the most

powerful amirs of the first part of the eighteenth century, 'Uthman Kat-khuda, is one example of a Mamluk who had close ties to one of the largest merchant families of the period, the Sharaybi. When after 1760 'Ali Bey al-Kabir embarked on his campaign to expand his power and the power of his house, the Qazdughli, he removed all the members of the Jewish community from their positions in charge of the customs houses and various urban tax farms and gave these positions to the newly arrived Syrian Christians, who had close ties to French merchants. This move reflected the growing involvement of France in the trade with Egypt. Peter Gran has argued that Egypt particularly after 1760 and the ascendancy of 'Ali Bey experienced a commercial revival that was matched by a cultural revival in literature, language, sciences, and history. Gran's argument that Egypt in the eighteenth century was not in a state of continuous decline accords with the views of other historians of the eighteenth century, notably Raymond and Hanna.[21]

Despite the inroads made by the European powers into the Indian Ocean trade, Egypt was able to maintain a dominant position in the East-West trade because it established a monopoly over the trade in coffee from Yemen, which started replacing spices in the sixteenth century. In 1554, the first coffeehouse appeared in Istanbul, and in 1573 customs duties in Egypt were extended to coffee.[22] By the end of the seventeenth century, half of all the coffee exported from Yemen went through Cairo, which was re-exported to the empire and to Europe. By the beginning of the eighteenth-century, according to Raymond, coffee amounted to one-half of France's imports from Egypt.[23] However, Egypt could not sustain its predominant position in the coffee trade because European merchants had gained access to Yemen, and the French were cultivating new sources of coffee production in their Caribbean colonies. In spite of these pressures on the coffee trade, as Raymond has shown, coffee exports represented one-third of Egypt's exports by the end of the eighteenth century and 60 out of 360 *wakala*s were devoted solely to coffee.[24]

The shifts in trade patterns had profound repercussions on Mamluk politics. Henry Laurens has pointed out that the sugar trade, like the spice and coffee trade, was also suffering from competition with sugar from European colonies in the Caribbean, and European textiles were replacing those produced in the Ottoman Empire generally, including Egypt.[25] It is Laurens's

opinion that the victory of the Mamluk beys, who controlled the rural tax farms, over the urban *ojaq*s, whose resource base came largely from trade, was linked to the weakening of the commercial economy by European competition with a concomitant decline in revenue. Egyptian agriculture was not only supplying the empire with grains and cereals, but there was also increasing European demand for foodstuffs and also cotton.[26] Raymond has also argued that the decline in international trade, whose exploitation had contributed to the prosperity of the Janissaries, was a factor in the diminution of their resources and consequently in their power.[27]

In 1798, according to Raymond's calculations, the revenue from agricultural tax farms was 411 million *para*s while revenue from the urban tax farms was 36 million *para*s. Of the 411 million, 274 million went directly to the tax farmers, 87 million to the Ottoman central government, and 49 million to the provincial government.[28] The Mamluks were able to increase their overall share of Egypt's tax revenues by withholding an increasingly larger percentage of Egypt's annual tribute to the Ottoman central government or by sending nothing, as happened between 1793 and 1798. The small size of the 1785 tribute provoked the Ottoman government to send an expedition to Egypt against the Mamluks, which yielded only short-term advantages to the Porte.

During the eighteenth century, the Porte began to compensate for the decline in revenues from Egypt by extending the *hulvan* to the property of defeated amirs. The *hulvan* was originally the price paid by those who acquired at auction vacant urban and rural tax farms. Additionally, the sultan assumed the right to seize all the properties of those who died without heirs or were in debt to the Imperial Treasury. During the eighteenth century and in particular between 1774 and 1775, the Porte recognized the seizure of the properties and tax farms of defeated amirs in return for a *hulvan* payment by those who emerged triumphant.[29] As Shaw has noted, "This induced the factions to compete with each other in providing rich *hulvan* payments to the Porte in return for support."[30] According to Shaw, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir promised the Porte a payment of 90 million *para*s in return for the support he had received in his successful struggle against rival amirs. After the death of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, his successor, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, sent more than 1 million *para*s in *hulvan* and public

treasury payments for the possessions of 'Ali Bey, which he had seized for himself with the assistance of the Porte.[31]

By controlling Egypt's revenues, the Mamluk grandees were able to support an opulent lifestyle that included enormous houses that not only symbolized their power and prestige but also served as centers of political and military power. They were also able to purchase slaves to increase the size of their households, which formed the basis of their power.

The Mamluk Revival: Continuity and Transformation

The two systems, the Mamluk sultanate of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries and the Mamluk resurgence of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shared certain characteristics that demonstrate continuity with the past as well as the Mamluk ability to adapt to prevailing circumstances. The continuity is not genealogical but is manifested in the realms of tradition, religion, culture, and aesthetics.

The first characteristic is the reliance of the resurgent Mamluks primarily on slave recruitment to expand their households, reproduce their power, and determine succession within the Mamluk hierarchy. The notable exception was the period of the Bahri sultanate and the reigns of Sultan Qalawun and his son and second successor, al-Nasir Muhammad, whose reign from 1293 to 1341 with two interruptions was the longest of any Mamluk sultan. Within the beylicate, the pattern of reliance on slaves to reproduce the household did not change after the Ottoman conquest. When power was consolidated in one household around the middle of the eighteenth century, succession went to the household head's favorite *mamluk,* who was often raised in the household of his master, and not to a freeborn biological son. Piterberg's study of the origin of the beys from the mid-nineteenth century demonstrates that the majority were slaves recruited from Georgia.[32] This is unlike the Ottoman tradition in which a biological son of the sultan succeeded his father. In the period studied by Leslie Peirce, for example, the sultans did not contract legal marriages, and there was open succession, meaning that the son of one of the sultan's concubines, not necessarily the eldest, succeeded his father. Although the *valide sultan,* like Hurrem, Sultan Suleiman's concubine and later legal wife, had

slave origins, the sultan's heir was his biological son. The Mamluks after 1516 were not "Ottomanized" when it came to determining the succession within their households, which reproduced and expanded through the recruitment of slaves rather than through biological reproduction.

The second characteristic is the role of the Mamluks in promoting Islam as a faith and a culture. Jonathan Berkey has described the roles that the Mamluks of the sultanate played in Egypt's intellectual and religious life.[33] These include constructing and endowing the lion's share of the mosques and schools in which Muslims worshipped and were educated and the role that members of the military elite played in the transmission of religious texts and knowledge.[34] According to Berkey, the chronicles and biographical dictionaries of the period are full of accounts of Mamluks, in particular the sultans, intervening directly in debates and disputes among leading members of the scholarly establishment.[35]

During the period of the Mamluk revival in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century, Mamluk beys and amirs played a similar role in the promotion of Islam. Perhaps the most renowned builder and restorer of Islamic monuments and religious buildings was 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda (d. 1776). He received a lengthy obituary in al-Jabarti's chronicle that contained a long list of his constructions and renovations as well as his acts of charity toward the poor, students, and the *'ulama* (religiously educated elite of scholars and judges).[36] According to al-Jabarti, he built or restored eighteen mosques and constructed numerous *zawiyya,* public fountains, troughs, schools, cisterns, and even an asylum for poor women without relatives.[37] Perhaps the most famous of his constructions is the *sabil-kuttab* (public fountain and Qur'anic school) on the Bayn al-Qasrayn in the neighborhood of Khan al-Khalili. Another of the revival's famous builders was Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab (d. 1775), who constructed a library and *madrassa* facing al-Azhar. However, the religious endowment that he established to fund the activities and pay the scholars was violated after his death and the buildings fell into disrepair.[38] Al-Jabarti admired Muhammad Bey, whom he praised as a religious man, who loved the *'ulama* and was inclined to do good deeds.[39] Murad Bey, who ruled Egypt with Ibrahim Bey and Isma'il Bey at the end of the eighteenth century, undertook the reconstruction of the mosque in Fustat of 'Amr Ibn al-'As, the conqueror

of Egypt in the sixth century, that had fallen into ruin. Although al-Jabarti was extremely critical of Murad Bey, whom he accused of being responsible for all of Egypt's problems and whom he described as "wicked," he also reported that the bey "liked the *ulama,* respected them, and was attentive to their words, receptive to their intercession, and tended by nature to be sympathetic to Islam and Muslims."[40] As Berkey said of the Mamluks of the medieval period, "But the Mamluks' expenditures on the institutional framework of religion and education were not simply a cynical ploy to co-opt potential rivals for political power . . . many of those individual soldiers and statesmen who made the decision to endow an institution of worship or learning did so out of a genuine interest in the religious and educational activities that took place within them."[41]

The third characteristic is aesthetics and culture, represented in several ways, including the architecture of public buildings and the palaces and grand homes of the Mamluks that, remarkably, survived without serious modification from the Circassian period of the sultanate into the nineteenth century. One important link between the period of the sultanate and that of the revival was the residential development of Azbakiyya begun during the reign of Qaytbay (1467–96) and expanded during the eighteenth century as the primary residence of the most important beys and their wives. The sumptuous palaces hugging the shores of the *birka* (lake) that filled with the inundation of the Nile became a showcase for the residential architectural style developed during the Circassian Mamluk period. As Janet Abu-Lughod has noted, the city's shape and size remained virtually constant for three hundred years after the Ottoman conquest as did its domestic architecture.[42] The Ottomans did not succeed in replacing the Mamluk architectural style with the Ottoman until the nineteenth century and the reign of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha.

Mamluk culture survived in other ways as well. In his research on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Winter has shown that the chief keepers of Mamluk identity and traditions after the Ottoman conquest were not Mamluk soldiers serving in the military units (*ojaq*s) but the ranking Circassian beys, who are clearly identifiable as a group.[43] He demonstrates that the Circassian amirs were the natural and even favored candidates for the post of *amir al-haj,* the commander of the forces protecting the pilgrim

caravan to Mecca. Ensuring that the pilgrimage route and the pilgrims to Mecca were protected particularly from attack by Bedouin was a primary source of legitimacy for the Ottoman sultans. So the selection by Ottoman authorities of Mamluk amirs for the post is significant. Thus Winter argues that even in early Ottoman Egypt, there is clear evidence of the continuous influence and power of the Mamluk amirs who would evolve to become a genuine Egyptian "aristocracy."[44] According to Winter, "Neo-Mamluk culture consisted of a strong Egyptian identity as contrasted with a more general Ottoman or Turkish one. This consciousness had at least a latent hostility to the Ottomans although it very rarely translated into an armed rebellion or even a declaration of disloyalty to the sultan . . . the strongest cohesive motive must have been to group solidarity as Mamluk amirs in general and as Mamluk factions or houses."[45]

Finally, *the fourth characteristic is the hybrid quality of Mamluk culture* since male and female slaves were Turks from Central Asia during the first period of the sultanate or later Christians from Georgia, Circassia, and the Caucasus who converted to Islam before taking up positions within the Mamluk hierarchy or, in the case of women, before marrying. However, scholars have only begun to pay serious attention to the duality of Mamluk culture or to how it may have acted as a unifying force during the period of the sultanate or the Mamluk resurgence of the eighteenth century. As slaves imported from regions outside Mamluk or Ottoman territory, they were likely to share the same religion and culture, come from the same impoverished origins, and at first have more in common with each other than with the people they dominated. As a quasi-caste, the Mamluk elite embodied two worlds simultaneously, the one of their origins and the one of their enslavement and eventual manumission. Based on the available evidence, the slaves in the eighteenth century had similar origins regionally. In his discussion of the men in 'Ali Bey al-Kabir's entourage, S. K. Lusignan names eighteen of whom he identified nine as Georgian in origin, seven as Circassian, and two unidentified as to origin.[46] Slavery was not only a strategy for enlarging the households and retinues of the grandees and providing them with concubines and wives but also a strategy for maintaining distance from the indigenous Egyptian population and creating cohesion within the political elite.

At the same time, *waqf* documents as well as other sources such as the chronicles of al-Jabarti provide evidence that *mamluk* men and women kept in touch with their families of origin in reports of marriage between an amir's favorite *mamluk* and the amir's sister, for example. Lusignan notes that 'Ali Bey al-Kabir married his sister to his favorite *mamluk*, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab. The relations between the amirs of the late eighteenth century and their Georgian homeland is confirmed also by Daniel Crecelius and Gotcha Djaparidze, who uncovered four letters from Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir and important members of his household.[47] The letters and other sources show that the Mamluks retained their native language, understood local politics, had frequent visits from family members, and sent money and gifts back to their families and villages.

Hanna, in her study of the cultural life of the Mamluks based on their private libraries and their literary salons, provides insights into how the Mamluks might have managed the duality of their identities.[48] Her examination of the estates left by deceased Mamluks shows extensive collections of books, mainly in Arabic but also a significant number in Persian and Turkish. The books that Hanna identified were not only on religion but also on history and literature, including the works of the social analyst Ibn Khaldun and the histories of al-Tabari and al-Maqrizi, as well as medicine and astronomy. Hanna argues,

> The fact that Mamluk amirs associated themselves with this heritage implied some level of identification with it. In spite of the linguistic and ethnic differences between the ruling Mamluks and the rest of the population and the military, the Mamluks were not completely ignorant of their cultural environment. If some Mamluks owned and read books in Arabic, both contemporary and classical works, then they were at a certain level at least "speaking the same language" as many other members of society both in the literal and the figurative sense. That many Mamluk amirs were familiar with Arabic, or fluent in it, is quite clear.[49]

The amir 'Uthman Katkhuda had an extensive library as did Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Birkawi, who not only could read and write but also made sure his own *mamluk*s were well-trained in Koran recital and calligraphy.[50] The literary salons and cultural evenings drew attendees from the local

population, including men of learning *('ulama),* and al-Birkawi was notable for opening his library to persons who wanted to read and copy what they wanted. Hanna speculates that the Mamluks, by mastering Arabic, building extensive libraries, and opening their homes for literary and cultural salons, were attempting to legitimize themselves with the general population and in particular with the *'ulama*. As Hanna notes, the Mamluks had economic and political power and small armies but not ultimate legitimacy, which rested with the Ottoman sultan.[51] Thus it becomes apparent that while the Mamluks were devising strategies for creating group cohesion and identity, such as importing male and female slaves with similar origins and marrying within this group, they were also demonstrating a level of integration into and leadership of the cultural and intellectual life of the wider Egyptian and Arab society.

The four shared characteristics noted above between the period of the Mamluk sultanate and that of the Mamluk revival, particularly within the beylicate, argue for a link or continuity between the two periods within an Egypt transformed from independent sultanate to Ottoman province. Most scholars of the latter period, including Shaw, Raymond, Piterberg, Crecelius, Winter, Hanna and Holt, have tended to see the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a time of revived Mamluk power centered in households reproduced primarily through slavery and have characterized the period as neo-Mamluk.[52] The characterization of the period as one of transformation with continuity is characteristic of the transition from the medieval period to the early modern in many societies including Egypt, where it was characterized by the transformation from a sultanate to an Ottoman province as the empire was nearing the limits of its expansion and would soon enter a period of imperial decentralization. The Mamluks adapted to and took advantage of these changes and developed institutions and patterns of behavior that showed some continuity with the past as well as innovations that allowed them to adapt to current realities.[53]

Women in the House

Controlling the revenues of the country was crucial to the power and success of a household, since they were necessary to purchase *mamluk*s and to

support an entourage of *mamluk*s and manumitted *mamluk*s who fought each other for dominance as well as the forces of the Ottoman administration. The rivalry among households was exacerbated by the policy of the Porte that rewarded the victor in the conflicts between Mamluks with the property of the vanquished amirs in return for the lucrative payment called the *hulvan*.

There were other conditions that exacerbated the factionalism of the resurgent Mamluks, primarily associated with reproduction through slavery rather than biologically and the need to legitimate themselves as they usurped power from the Ottoman administration. These two things were, of course, connected. During the sultanate, Mamluk rule was legitimized first by the Mamluk defeat of the Mongols and second by their undisputed control of the empire, its institutions, its administrative apparatus, and its military forces. Once defeated by the Ottomans, they lost both legitimacy and control. Re-formed Mamluk houses became rivals and opponents of each other. Many scholars of the resurgent Mamluk period have focused on Mamluk rivalry and factionalism and on the system's instability and tendency toward fragmentation. What has not been explained is its remarkable longevity.

For example, Holt and Winter have emphasized the intense rivalry and extreme factionalism that characterized the resurgent Mamluk period and Mamluk political culture. Winter wrote that the struggles were "fierce and bloody; personal, political and primarily economic interests were at stake." Within the Mamluk system there were centrifugal forces to be sure but there were centripetal ones as well. Chief among these was the creation of a fictive kinship system that strengthened the bonds between men both horizontally and vertically as "fathers" of manumitted slave "sons," as "brothers" of men with whom they had once been enslaved, and as "uncles" of the *mamluk*s of their "brothers." David Ayalon, who has written extensively on the Mamluk sultanate and also on the Mamluk system during the Ottoman period, noted that one of the biggest differences between the two periods was the use of kinship terms such as father *(walid)*, son *(ibn)*, uncle *('amm),* and grandfather *(jadd)* to express Mamluk relationships. According to Ayalon, these terms were in use during the Ottoman period but not during the sultanate.[54]

Kinship systems cannot be created by men alone. They require women to create the horizontal links between men and also women's acquiescence to the sexual arrangements made for them by the powerful males. It was common for the head of a household to give the gift of a concubine to an ally or a would-be ally or to arrange marriages within his household between one of his *mamluk*s and a freed female slave. Tactics such as these strengthened the bonds between men.

Mamluk marriages were primarily political and were important in legitimizing men's claims to power. For example, when one household defeated a rival household, the widows of the defeated amirs with any property they owned or controlled were immediately taken into the households of the victors as wives. Thus women served to legitimize male claims to power and to provide important elements of continuity and cohesion within the household. They also brought with them any property they owned or controlled as proprietors, heirs, or administrators of religious endowments. If their husbands were not killed but had retreated to Upper Egypt until conditions warranted their return, women served as important safeguards of marital property. Because women owned property in their own right, it could not be confiscated by the victorious amirs and neither could the property they managed as administrators of religious endowments, including those of their absent husbands. Thus their legal right to own and manage property served to increase their status and influence within the household.

While women apparently had little power to refuse the sexual arrangements made for them, their marriages to men of rank within the Mamluk system also gave them status and wealth. Although their sexual autonomy was constrained, they had more autonomy in other spheres, primarily the economic. They used the wealth they acquired to buy and sell property and to create endowments so that they and their heirs could benefit from the income. Women with means could also purchase female slaves of their own, who were married off to men in other households. In this way, they created influential patronage networks of their own and enhanced their standing within their households as arrangers of marriages and conduits of information from their former slaves with whom they had a continuing relationship.

Historically, women's role in the households of the Mamluks has been overlooked by scholars and overshadowed by the men whose names and exploits are much better known. In part, this is due to their alleged seclusion in the harem and the assumption that they were powerless and helpless and thus would not appear in the historical records of the era. However, there is information about these women, and historians have been learning where to look, chiefly at the legal documents of the Ottoman-era courts, which show that women of all classes were active users of the courts for a variety of reasons. Through the theoretical insights of scholars like Rubin and Butler and historical research in the court documents of the period, we can recast harem women as primary players in the history of their own lives.

Conclusion

The Mamluks of Egypt were well positioned to take advantage of changes and weakness in the Ottoman Empire, in particular the increasing inability of the Porte to project its power into the provinces. Ironically, the springboard for the Mamluk revival was the Porte's decision after the conquest to create twenty-four *sanjak bey*s who would hold important positions within the Ottoman administration of Egypt. Rather than becoming loyal salaried functionaries of the empire, however, the beys sought to become increasingly autonomous and eventually were able challenge the Ottoman governor's power and infiltrate the military corps that were supposed to protect him and Ottoman interests in Egypt. By asserting control over the agricultural tax farms, the beys found sources of revenue to build and expand their households and to equip their *mamluk*s against the forces of the Ottoman governor and their Mamluk rivals.

The timing was serendipitous for the Mamluks. The decentralization of Ottoman power, the rise of local notables or *'ayan*s, changes in the land tenure and tax collection systems, the inflationary pressures of the sixteenth century, which had negative effects on salaried government officials including an increasingly mutinous military corps—all of these benefited the Mamluks who institutionally were heirs to the Mamluk amirs of the sultanate. Whereas in other parts of the empire local notables of nonslave

origin arose as power centers, in Egypt the Mamluks were the best placed to expand their power at the expense of the Ottoman administration.

There were various transition points at which we can see how power in Egypt began to shift away from the Ottoman administration in Cairo and toward the Mamluks, including 1621 and 1623, when the beys participated in or led insurrections against the Ottoman governor along with the senior officers of the military corps, and the civil war of 1711 that further weakened Ottoman power in Egypt. However, perhaps the most important turning point was the alliance between Ibrahim Katkhuda, head of the Janissaries and the Qazdughli household, and Ridwan Katkhuda, head of the Julfiyya household. Ibrahim began the practice of appointing his *mamluk*s, which led over time to the fusion of the beylical households and the military corps into one career track within the Ottoman system. The Qazdughli household became dominant by mid-century and its leader, ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir, became emboldened to challenge, unsuccessfully, the Ottoman presence in Egypt and to detach Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean from the empire.

Although women are not usually mentioned as partners in the construction of Mamluk households or the Mamluk ascendancy, they made important contributions to the stability and continuity of the household and to the maintenance and reproduction of its power, as we shall see in the succeeding chapters. Although Egypt's share of the lucrative transit trade from the East was reduced significantly by the European presence in the Indian Ocean, it was able to compensate through the trade in coffee from Yemen and by integration into the economy of the Ottoman Empire, which it supplied with the luxury goods of the East, coffee and more mundane items like linen, rice, sugar, cereals, and leather. Mamluk women benefitted from the strength of Egypt's commercial economy through investments in the urban commercial real estate that formed part of the trade or manufacturing infrastructure of the city. Through these investments, described in chapter 5, women could bring to their households considerable wealth either as owners of property, as heirs to the property of others, including their husbands, and/or as managers of the property of others as administrators of religious endowments, for example. The property of Mamluk women was not subject to confiscation when the head of one Mamluk

faction defeated the head of another one, particularly if it was safeguarded as an income-producing religious endowment and also because Islamic law allowed women control over their own separate property. Mamluk women also lived longer than men, often outliving two or three husbands and becoming living symbols of lineage continuity. The lives of three such women, Amina Khatun, Shawikar Qadin, and Nafisa al-Bayda, are described in detail in chapter 9.

The Mamluk system that emerged in the late seventeenth century ended after the arrival of the French in 1798 and the reimposition of Ottoman authority after the French withdrawal in 1802. This period of Egyptian history can best be described as early modern because it was a time of transition from the medieval period of the Mamluk sultanate to the period of Muhammad 'Ali, who would set in motion far-reaching changes in the politics, economy, and social order.

Becoming a Mamluk

3

Slaves in the Family

Islam, Household Slavery,
and the Construction of Kinship

At the age of thirteen or fourteen, the girl who came to be known as Khadiga Qadin became a slave. Her parents, probably impoverished Georgian peasants, may have sold her to a slave dealer hoping she would be bought for a large and wealthy household in Istanbul or Cairo.[1] Or she may have been kidnapped and then sold to a dealer, a not uncommon occurrence. From her home somewhere in the Georgian region of the Caucasus, she and other slaves began the arduous journey by sailboat from one of the Black Sea ports such as Sohum Kale or Batum to their final destination. Slaves and slave dealers traversed the Black Sea via provincial cities like Trabzon, Samsun, and Sinop. Some slaves were sold along the route and others, like Khadiga, were destined for the large slave markets of Istanbul, Izmir, the Levant, and Egypt. We do not know the route that Khadiga's life took when she arrived in Cairo. She may have been bought directly by the man who would eventually become her husband, the Mamluk Amir Ahmad Katkhuda, or, more likely, by one of his agents, for his household in Cairo. Or she may have entered the household of one of Ahmad Katkhuda's Mamluk allies, who gave her to the amir as a concubine or a wife. Although Khadiga did not know it at the time, when she reached the end of her long and wearying journey and arrived in Cairo, her opportunity for worldly success had markedly improved.

We don't know very much about the early part of Khadiga's life because there is no memoir or journal to tell us how she felt when, as an adolescent girl, she was torn away from her family and sold into an

unknown and uncertain future. We don't know why Khadiga was not sold along the route as a servant but instead was reserved for sale as a concubine in a wealthy Cairene household. What qualities did men like Ahmad Katkhuda prize in their concubines and in their future wives for themselves or members of their household? Whatever these qualities were—beauty, youth, and virginity undoubtedly among them—the slave dealer must have recognized them in Khadiga. As a white slave and a prospective concubine rather than a housemaid, she would fetch a much higher price than a servant, so she was worth keeping until the dealer reached the big slave markets of Istanbul or Cairo.[2]

By 1780, the young girl, born a Christian in Georgia, had been transformed from a slave concubine to a freed slave, a Muslim, and the wife of her former master. We know this because in 1780 Khadiga Qadin Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, as she had come to be known, registered her religious endowment *(waqf)* in the Cairo court of al-Bab al-'Ali.[3] From the text of the endowment, we know that Khadiga married her former master, Ahmad Katkhuda, who was a member of the Janissaries, known as the Mustahfizan in Egypt, and of the most powerful Mamluk household of the time, the Qazdughli. At this stage of her life, Khadiga was a widow and a wealthy woman as her religious endowment testifies. Endowments like Khadiga's consisted of property that produced an income sufficient to support the charities and good works stipulated in the endowment deed and to provide an income to the donor herself during her lifetime and to her heirs after her death. Khadiga endowed property in various parts of the city including a house near Bab Zuwayla, a mill in Bulaq for crushing lentils, a shop in a housing/storage/shop complex known as a *wakala,* and a house in a prestigious quarter of the city known as Birkat al-Fil or Elephant Lake because of its shape. The house was described as having a portico *(mandara),* two reception rooms *(qa'at)*, and windows overlooking the lake.

For those whose knowledge of slavery is based on the chattel slavery of the American South, Khadiga's transition from a slave concubine to a free woman, wife, and property owner would seem nearly impossible. However, Islamic law and the structure of the Mamluk system of the eighteenth century made Khadiga's fate more the rule than the exception. Consider, for example, the 126 eighteenth-century women who endowed property

and whose deeds are preserved in the Ministry of Religious Endowments. Of the total, 43 women were freed slaves in Mamluk households and 11 were the freeborn daughters and sisters of Mamluks. By far, the estates of the freed slave women were richer in property than those of the freeborn.

Both men and women in Islamic states like the Mamluk and the Ottoman were able to transcend their status as slaves, become free men and women, and join the male military and bureaucratic elite or the female elite of legal wives with all the rights of freeborn Muslims. These rights included property rights for women. It was this aspect of household slavery in the Islamic Middle East since the Abbasid Empire of the ninth century that has led observers and scholars to describe it as "benign." This adjective has become attached to Islamic slavery not only because the ruling elites were often former slaves but also because of the nature of the work assigned to household slaves, because assimilation into a household or family was common, and because slavery was not in all or even most cases hereditary. Yet, no system of slavery was benign even if, in the Islamic world, it did not approximate the social death that Orlando Patterson argued that slaves experienced.[4] It can only be construed as benign if the paradigm of slavery is the race-based chattel slavery of the sugar, rice, and cotton plantations of the Americas, the Caribbean, and Brazil.[5] However, for most of the world history of slavery, the model was slavery as practiced in Africa, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and East and South Asia, while New World slavery, particularly in North America, was the deviation from the norm.[6] The misperception of American slavery as the model obfuscates the nature of slavery as practiced outside of the Americas.

The study of slavery in Islamic society has lagged behind that of other regions of the world, which may be one reason why Islamic slavery is conspicuous by its absence from comparative studies of slavery.[7] There are those, notably Y. Hakan Erdem, Bernard Lewis, and Murray Gordon, who believe that the study of slavery is underdeveloped because of its extreme sensitivity as a topic, which makes this a problem of ideology rather than sources.[8] Erdem has described the inattention to slavery during the Ottoman period as "near-total collective amnesia," and Gordon has charged "a conspiracy of silence" concerning Arab slavery.[9] Ottoman and Mamluk slavery has in general not been studied as a system with some notable

exceptions including Erdem and Toledano for the Ottoman period and Ayalon for the period of the Mamluk sultanate and the eighteenth-century revival.[10] In general, however, the focus of attention has not been on the system of slavery and thus on the procurement of slaves, the slave trade, the practice of slavery, or the treatment of slaves but rather on the aftermath of enslavement when manumitted men and women took their place among the elite. Ottoman and Mamluk studies of slavery exist in the realm of political rather than social or cultural history, with some notable exceptions including Toledano, Powell, and Peirce.[11]

A Global Perspective on Islamic Slavery

In studies of world slavery generally, the focus has been on male slaves, and there has been a tendency to treat concubinage as though it was not really slavery.[12] In Ottoman and Mamluk historiography, the accounts of slavery convey the notion that the slaves were almost exclusively men by focusing on the procurement and training of male slaves and on their elevation to elite status in the military and bureaucracy. Peirce's monograph was the first to focus on the slave women in the household of the Ottoman sultans during the early modern period.[13] Peirce demonstrated the importance of the sultan's women to the construction and reproduction of his household, particularly after the fifteenth century when the sultans reproduced the dynasty through concubinage rather than legal marriage. She also showed that the sultan's mother and his consorts were able to acquire and wield power from the confines of the harem.

As for the Mamluk period of the sultanate and its revival in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, scholars generally have focused primarily on the young boys who were bought and trained as military slaves and have paid scant attention to the female slaves. As part of a debate over the composition of the eighteenth-century Mamluk households, for example, Piterberg examined the origins of the beys between the 1760s and the French invasion of 1798.[14] He discovered that the overwhelming majority of them were manumitted *mamluk*s, which led him to argue that the eighteenth-century Mamluk system relied primarily on the recruitment of slaves who were primarily Georgian in origin. Piterberg's findings,

important in themselves, were used to support the argument that the system that arose in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century to challenge Ottoman authority was indeed Mamluk and should be seen as the revival of an earlier Mamluk polity. In other words, the writer assumes that the character of the Mamluk system can be determined on the basis of the male members of the household.

In sub-Saharan Africa, as Claire C. Klein and Martin H. Robertson have pointed out, although most of the slaves were women, "many accounts of African slavery are written as though the slaves were exclusively men."[15] Thus assumptions are made about the slave system and about the women slaves themselves that are incorrect or incomplete because the slave, the historical subject, is gendered as male.[16] These assumptions include claims that women slaves were valued for their reproductive capacity when available evidence indicates that slave women were subfecund and that the majority of female slaves performed mostly productive labor just as free women did. Also, there seems to be a consensus among scholars of African slavery that one of its chief characteristics was the integration of slaves into kin groups and families, which is believed to mitigate the harshest aspects of enslavement. However, as Robertson and Klein noted, even the complete assimilation of women into society as free persons would not ensure women equal status.[17] This is because the sexual division of labor exploited women and was justified by an ideology that assumed female inferiority. Thus, even in the allegedly more "benign" form of slavery in Africa, assimilated/freed women would still not be the equals of freed men because of the asymmetry of power in the prevailing gender system.

Michele Zimbalist Rosaldo pointed out that a woman has "ascribed" status, which means she is naturally what she is, while a man has "achieved" status because he has to become a man.[18] Rosaldo's elaboration on ascribed versus achieved status can help to explain why less attention has been paid to female slaves in both Ottoman and Mamluk historiography:

Men are, in a real sense, identified with and through those groups of kin or peers that cut across domestic units; ranked in hierarchies of achievement, they are differentiated in their roles. These systems of ranking, grouping, and differentiation comprise the explicit social order that social scientists

typically describe . . . women are given a social role and definition by virtue either of their age or of their relationship to men. Women, then, are conceived almost exclusively as sisters, wives, and mothers. Whereas men achieve rank as a result of explicit achievement, differences among women are generally seen as the product of idiosyncratic characteristics, such as temperament, personality, and appearance.[19]

The names of the Mamluks attest to the ascribed status of the women in comparison to the achieved status of the men. Khadiga, for example, was named in terms of her female attributes as a concubine and wife and exclusively in relation to her former master and then husband, Ahmad Kat-khuda. He, on the other hand, was defined and named in terms of his rank (amir) and his position (*katkhuda*/officer) in a particular military unit (the Mustahfizan/Janissaries). Thus, while a male slave had to be trained to achieve his status as a man/Mamluk, the condition of concubinage or marriage for a female slave was perceived as an extension of her nature as a woman.

Since political history is in fact the study of power, it has been the male Mamluks and the slave system they created and reproduced that have been the object of study. In the gender hierarchy of eighteenth-century Mamluk society, military training and service, from which women were excluded, were the primary paths to power. Manumitted men took their place within the hierarchy and gained control over the most lucrative sources of wealth. These were the rural and urban tax farms that were attached to the various positions within the Mamluk system as well as the salaries for service in the military corps. The exclusion of women from these paths to power reproduced the gender hierarchy, meaning that female slaves would not be the social equals of their male counterparts after manumission.

The exclusion of women from formal power within the Mamluk system as well as the notion that the harem could not be penetrated by standard historical research methods have resulted in the almost complete erasure of eighteenth-century women from the historical record. The lives of female slaves like Khadiga both before and after manumission have been largely ignored as historians have tended to concentrate on the male *mamluk*s and the leaders of powerful households in particular. A paucity of sources is

not the reason for the dearth of historical studies of female slaves in Egypt. There are other possible explanations including the assumption that a history of male slaves is in fact the history of slavery in any given region, including Egypt. It is possible to gain some understanding of the life Khadiga and other women slaves were likely to have led in the first stage of their lives in the Mamluk households of Cairo. One way is to integrate Mamluk slavery into the global history of slavery and by comparison gain some insight into the condition and lives of female slaves in Egypt. Another is to consider how Islamic law regulated the practice of slavery and what advantages—and disadvantages—it could give to female slaves, especially concubines. We can also draw on the postslavery history of women like Khadiga through legal documents such as those that created their religious endowments. As legal documents that had to be witnessed and recorded in court for endowments that were supposed to exist in perpetuity, these endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)* have been preserved and can be found in various archives in Cairo. These documents contain revealing personal information about the women making the endowments including their sexual and marital history; their relationship with their families, friends, slaves, and former slaves; and even the degree to which they were integrated as freed women and Muslims into Mamluk society. Finally, there are the chronicles of al-Jabarti and al-Damurdashi that contain accounts of the experiences and exploits of Mamluk women that greatly enhance our understanding of their lives as concubines, wives, and widows in Cairene society.

Defining Slavery in Islamic Law

When Khadiga registered her endowment in 1780, her name as the donor was recorded as the following: Khadiga Qadin Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda *ma'tuqat wa zawjat al-marhum* al-Amir Ahmad Katkhuda Ta'ifat Mustah-fizan al-Qazdughli. The names of women slaves were a genealogical record of their lives in Cairo that provided information about their sexual and marital history as well as their rank and status. The names themselves indicated their origins as slaves. Khadiga Qadin was named "Bint 'Abd Allah," which means "daughter of the servant of God." This signified Khadiga's slave origins; she was the daughter of God's servant because she did not have

a Muslim father. Since to be without a father is shameful, her name, like the names of other women slaves who converted to Islam, included "Bint 'Abd Allah" to testify to her conversion. A male slave after his conversion would be known as "Ibn 'Abd Allah," son of God's servant. Khadiga was also known as "the white" to distinguish the white slaves, who were Georgian or Circassian in origin and destined to be concubines and legal wives, from black slaves of African origin who were more likely to be domestic servants.[20] Khadiga's name also included the words *ma'tuqat,* which means freed slave, and *zawjat,* which means wife. Her name tells us that she was the slave of Ahmad Katkhuda who manumitted her and married her. When Khadiga recorded her religious endowment in court, her husband was dead *(marhum).* It was not unusual for Mamluk and Ottoman women to make their economic activity public when they became widows.[21] Khadiga's former master and husband was a high-ranking member of the Mamluk elite as an amir; a high-ranking officer in the elite military corps, the Mustahfizan, which is how the Janissaries were known in Egypt; and a member of the most powerful Mamluk household, the Qazdughli.

By contrast, a woman who was not a slave would be named like this daughter of a shaykh: Al-Haja Halima Khatun Bint al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghaytani, or Halima, daughter of Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghaytani. The term *al-haja* is an honorific that means Halima made the pilgrimage to Mecca.[22] Another example of a freeborn member of the Mamluk elite is Al-Sitt 'A'isha Hanim Bint al-Amir Radwan Agha Ta'ifat Gamaliyan, or 'A'isha Hanim, the daughter of the amir Radwan, *agha* of one of the military units known as the Gamaliyan or Cameliers in Egypt.[23]

The ability of women like Khadiga to make the transition from slave/concubine to wife with the same legal rights, including property rights, as the freeborn Halima and 'A'isha was a result of the rights given to women by Islamic law; as a result of the fact that slavery was regulated by the law and tilted toward the humane treatment, manumission, and assimilation of slaves into families; and finally, as a result of the Mamluk system of household politics that reproduced itself as a ruling elite through the enslavement and manumission of men and women. Far from being peripheral members of the households as mere appendages to the males who did the real work or as odalisques virtually imprisoned in harems whose only role was to

satisfy male sexual desires, Mamluk women were crucial to the household's construction, reproduction, continuity, and stability.

In the literature on slavery around the world, there is often a dispute over the definition of slavery and what constitutes enslavement. In general, the need for precise definitions of slavery occurred in those regions where assimilation of slaves into kin groups and families was possible and where slaves did a variety of work so that the boundaries between slave, serf, and servant were often unclear. However, Islamic law in all four schools was clear about who and what a slave was, how slaves could be acquired, the kind of treatment a slave should receive, and how manumission could be achieved. Islamic law makes slaves a legally defined category of persons, and there is a vocabulary for the various kinds of slaves as well as words for slavery itself and for manumission. A slave is an *'abd* (pl. *'abid*); a freed slave is a *ma'tuq* (m.) or *ma'tuqa* (f.). There are also words for military slaves such as *mamluk, ghulam* (Persian), or *kul* (Turkish). A concubine was known as a *jariyya*. The Qur'an often refers to a slave as *"ma malakat aymanukum"* or that which your right hand possesses.

Under the law, there were only two ways that slaves could be acquired lawfully, as captives in war or through birth in slavery.[24] Islamic law prohibits the enslavement of free people. Throughout history, Islamic armies gave their enemies the option to surrender and to recognize Islamic authority over them. In return, Muslim rulers recognized the conquered peoples, if they were Christians and Jews, as protected people (*dhimmi*s), and they were allowed to practice their religion in return for the payment of the poll tax *(jizya)*. The Muslim rulers granted this concession to Christian and Jews because the Qur'an designated them as "People of the Book" in recognition of their monotheism and their revealed scripture.

Scholars have argued over the question of how, if the law was clear about how slaves could be acquired, Muslim societies justified the enslavement of the free peoples of the Caucasus who, as Christians, were also "People of the Book." The scholarly consensus seems to be that the enslavement of free persons was sanctioned by the legal fiction that they came from the Dar al-Harb, or abode of war, where Islamic law did not prevail and a Muslim ruler did not preside. In the case of the Ottoman levy of Christian boys from the Balkans, known as the *devshirme,* from which

the empire's military and bureaucratic elite was created, the justification was that populations that refused to surrender to the Ottoman armies and Muslim authority forfeited their claim to protected status. Thus they and their descendants were subject to enslavement. This justification was the case for the peoples of Bosnia and Albania, who continued to be subject to the *devshirme* even after their conversion to Islam.[25]

Birth in slavery was the only other legal way that a slave could be created. In other words, a child fathered by a slave and born to a slave mother who had converted to Islam would also be a slave and would legally belong to the woman's master.[26] Conversion to Islam by a slave woman did not mean that manumission was forthcoming or automatic. The exception to this rule, that the mother's status determined the status of the child, was a concubine who gave birth to her master's child. In that case, the child would be free upon birth. This was one of the ways that Islamic law and custom militated against the creation of a system of hereditary slavery. Another way was that a child born in a master's house to one of his slaves would be unlikely to be sold. Thus the law and customs that helped to shape a nonhereditary slave system also condoned the buying and selling of free persons in slave markets like those in Istanbul and Cairo. Without war captives or a system of slave breeding, which did not exist in the Middle East, slaves would have to be imported from outside as they were from the Caucasus and Africa. This was the case for the Mamluks of Egypt during the period of the sultanate (1260–1516) and for the revival in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Mamluks imported their slaves first from Central Asia and then from Circassia and Georgia in the Caucasus. It was the Ottoman Empire that was the exception to this rule because it generally enslaved young Christian boys from inside the European provinces of the empire rather than importing them from outside.

Slavery existed in the Middle East before Islam; it was known in the city-states of Mesopotamia from 3000 BCE as well as in ancient Greece and Rome. The Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula practiced slavery before the rise of Islam in the seventh century. The practice continued as the Arabs began to convert to the new religion, and law became the mechanism by which slavery was regulated. After the rise of Islam and the creation of an Islamic empire, large-scale plantation slavery was practiced for a time in

Mesopotamia, where the Arabs cultivated sugarcane in the marshes of the lower Tigris and Euphrates rivers. A slave rebellion, known as the Zanj because of the reputed East African origin of the slaves, began in 868–69 AD and lasted until 883.[27] From that time on, large-scale plantation-type slavery practically disappeared from the Middle East and slaves were used primarily as domestic servants, as concubines, and as the military and bureaucratic elite in various imperial Islamic states. Although the gang slavery that characterized New World slavery was not predominant in the Middle East, slaves were used in agriculture, mining, and commerce, particularly in long-distance trade, and in the crafts sector of the economy. Slaves who were eunuchs served in a variety of important roles such as protectors of the harem and guardians of mosques and tombs.[28]

The importation of Turks from Central Asia as slave-soldiers for the armies of the Abbasid caliphs began during the reigns of Mamoun and Mutasim (813–42) in the ninth century. Lewis has noted that military slavery was a new institution in Islam when the caliphs began doing what the Romans and Chinese had done before them, namely, recruiting slaves from beyond their frontiers for their imperial armies.[29]

Slavery and the Construction of Kinship

Islam never preached the abolition of slavery but instead tried to mitigate its harshest aspects through the law, appeals to Islamic piety, and admonishments concerning the treatment of slaves.[30] In *sura* (chapter) IX, *aya* (verse) 60, the Qur'an says, "Alms are for the poor and the needy, and . . . for those in bondage *(al-riqab)*."[31] In Islamic law, a slave was a composite or a hybrid, having the nature of a thing and a person. As a slave, s/he was property and subject to the rights of ownership and thus could be sold, given away as a gift, or inherited. Yet, according to the law, s/he could not be treated like other property. In various ways, Islamic law curtailed the absolute right of ownership. Even though a slave was property, law and society recognized his/her essential humanity. For example, the Qur'an in IV:36 calls on Muslims to serve God by doing good to "parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet) and what your right

hands possess."[32] "Those whom your right hand possesses *(ma malakat aymanukum)*" was a common euphemism for slaves, male and female. The law protected a slave's life and even provided for manumission or sale to another master in cases of extreme cruelty. Slaves could and did petition the courts against their masters on various grounds including mistreatment. The law forbade a child to be separated from his slave mother until the age of seven. However, as already noted, it was unlikely that a master or mistress would sell a child born to a slave in his or her home. Islamic law also recognized the humanity of slaves by permitting them to marry with their masters' consent.

There are many Qur'anic verses that enjoin owners to treat their slaves with kindness, such as "for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom."[33] In this verse, the Qur'an is telling Muslims that penance or expiation for misdeeds can be achieved through acts of kindness including manumitting a slave. In describing the steep and difficult path to virtue, the Qur'an enjoins Muslims to specific acts of charity including "freeing the slave *(faku raqabatin)*" and giving food to the orphan or the poor.[34] Also, the Qur'an defines righteousness not only as belief in God and his prophets but also in spending one's wealth for "your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer and for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves."[35]

The Qur'an recommended manumission as a meritorious act that was enjoined on pious Muslims. Slaves were often emancipated upon the death of their masters, or a slave could buy his or her way out of slavery. Indeed, if a slave asked his or her master for contractual manumission, freedom upon payment of a certain sum, the master was supposed to consent: "and if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (for manumission) give them such a deed. If ye know any good in them; yea, give them something yourselves out of the means which God has given you."[36]

Islamic law permitted concubinage or cohabitation outside of marriage by a man with his female slave(s). For example, in the verse describing those with whom men could have sexual relations, the Qur'an says, "those joined to them in the marriage bond, or slaves *(ma malakat aymanukum)*."[37] No limit was placed on the number of concubines a man could have. He could not, however, have sexual relations with his wife's slave(s) or with a married

female slave. When a female slave had a child by her master, she became an *umm walad* (child's mother). Henceforth, she could not be sold during her master's lifetime and would likely be freed upon his death. If she were not freed, she would become part of her master's estate and could be sold. However, the children fathered by her master would be born free because otherwise they would be their father's slaves. This was illegal in Islamic law, which prohibited the enslaving of relatives. In three of the four schools of law, legal paternity of a concubine's child was relatively easy to establish. If there was an implicit admission of sexual relations between the master and his slave, in other words, if the slave was pregnant, the master was deemed to be the father. Only in the Hanafi school of law, which prevailed in the Ottoman Empire, did the court require the master to acknowledge that the child was his. The children born of a man's concubine were considered legitimate and the legal equals of the children born to his legal wife. The children of a man's concubine inherited from their father's estate in the same way as the children born to his legal wife.

A Muslim master could not be the husband of his slave. In order to marry her, he would first have to manumit her. He also had to provide her with a dowry, which the law required to be paid to all women upon marriage. Only the Hanafi school of law permitted a Muslim to marry his Jewish or Christian slave. In the case of Khadiga, for example, her master, Ahmad Katkhuda, freed her before marrying her. It was also common in a Mamluk household for the head of the household to manumit a male slave and a female slave and marry them to each other. For example, Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir (the Great), who ruled Egypt in a triumvirate with Murad Bey and Isma'il Bey in the late eighteenth century, was the master of a slave, Mahbuba Khatun. Documents related to her religious endowment reveal that she was eventually manumitted by Ibrahim Bey and became the legal wife of Isma'il Kashif, who was also once a slave of Ibrahim Bey, who manumitted both of them and undoubtedly arranged their marriage.[38] In this case, Ibrahim Bey undoubtedly served as the agent *(wali)* for Mahbuba and provided the dowry.

The transition of women like Khadiga and Mahbuba from slaves to free women occurred in a society where slavery was regulated by law and tilted toward manumission and assimilation, where slavery was mainly

domestic rather than agricultural, and where the ruling elite reproduced itself through the purchase and training of new slaves rather than through natural reproduction. Thus the lives of Khadiga and Mahbuba would have been very different from the lives of female slaves in the American South or the Caribbean. As a counterpoint to women like Khadiga and Mahbuba in eighteenth-century Cairo, we have the example of Celia, a slave in nineteenth-century Missouri. Although all of these women were slaves and the property of men, their lives and the lives of their children took very different paths. Khadiga and Mahbuba were not doomed to spend their lives as slaves and their children, if any, were born free. Celia, on the other hand, would live and die a slave and her children, although sired by a free, white, and prosperous farmer, would be slaves too.

A Comparative Perspective on Women in Slavery

In 1855, Robert Newsome, a Missouri farmer and widower, purchased the slave Celia when she was fourteen years old and he was sixty.[39] On the journey home, Newsome raped her. Once back at his farm, Newsome established Celia in a cabin and expected her to serve him as his de facto concubine and occasional cook. Newsom's wife had died in 1849 but he did not remarry. Celia bore two of Newsome's children and was pregnant with a third child when she was tried for Newsome's murder. Based on hers and others' testimony, we know that Celia had warned Newsome to stop coming to her cabin for sexual intercourse, threatening to harm him if he did not stop. Eventually under duress and out of fear that her children would be harmed, she confessed to killing Newsome. Celia was arrested for bludgeoning Newsome to death, burning his body in her fireplace, and hiding the evidence. Charged with murder, she was defended by a court-appointed white attorney who argued that according to a Missouri statute, a woman could use deadly force to defend her honor. Section 29 of the second article of the Missouri statutes of 1845 made it a crime "to take any woman unlawfully against her will and by force, menace or duress, compel her to be defiled."[40] However, as the judge's instructions to the jury made clear, Celia could not claim defense against rape because the law applied to white women only. Missouri, like other slave-holding states, had no law

prohibiting the rape of black women by white or black men. As Eugene G. Genovese has said, "Rape meant, by definition, rape of white women, for no such crime as rape of a black women existed at law."[41] The law throughout the slave states also prohibited slaves from testifying against a white person, even a deceased person like Newsome. Since Celia could not testify in her own defense and she could not legally defend herself from rape, the jury found her guilty. She was hanged on November 16, 1855, shortly after giving birth in prison to a stillborn infant.

Khadiga and Celia became slaves the same way, through purchase by a master as young girls. Both of their masters engaged in sexual relations with their slaves, and their consent was not required. In other words, it was legally impossible for a slave woman to be raped or forced to have sexual relations against her will. Neither Islamic law nor Missouri law recognized rape as a crime that could be committed against a slave by her owner. In Islamic law, a master had the right to engage in sexual activity with his female slave. The law legally recognized a slave meant for cohabitation with her master as a concubine and made a distinction between her and a female slave meant for domestic service. In the American states where slavery was legal, female slaves were de facto concubines without the legal protections that Islamic law gave female slaves including the possibility of eventual manumission for themselves and the birth in freedom of their children.

Whereas slaves and free persons were subject to *shari'a* (Islamic law) in the Islamic world, in American slave-holding states there were different laws for whites and blacks, such as the slave code of Louisiana. In general, courts held that slaves were outside the protection of common law and could only rely on the various slave codes or statutory laws, if they existed, for legal recourse. Since there was no statute allowing a black woman to protect herself using deadly force against rape and common law did not apply to her and she could not testify against a white man, Celia essentially had no way to defend herself against the charge of murder.

In 1853, William Goodell observed that the slave "becomes a person whenever he is to be punished . . . He is under the control of the law, though unprotected by law, and can know law only as an enemy, and not as a friend."[42] The law in American slave-holding states gave the master the

right to do pretty much as he pleased with his property, including having sex with his female slaves and beating, even mutilating, any of his slaves as punishment. The U.S. courts and legislatures were reluctant to intervene between an owner and his property even in cases where a master killed his slave. Although the law in slave-holding states recognized the humanity of slaves, by holding them responsible for crimes, for example, the courts were reluctant to compromise the master's authority over his slaves. Thus the law and the courts wavered between protecting a slave's life and protecting a master's right to control and discipline his slaves. In one of the most famous judicial decisions of the antebellum South, *State v. Mann,* Judge Thomas Ruffin of the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled in 1830 that slaveholders could not be prosecuted for assaults on their slaves: "The power of the master must be absolute to render the submission of the slave perfect."[43] The chief justice of the Supreme Court, Roger B. Taney, in the case of the runaway slave Dred Scott, found that under the U.S. Constitution blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."[44]

One of the starkest differences between slavery as practiced in Mamluk Egypt and in the American South and one that made assimilation almost impossible was the racial basis of American slavery. As Paul Finkelman has pointed out, in other times and places enslavement was never confined to a single race or ethnic group.[45] In American slave-holding states, which presumed that all blacks were slaves, lawmakers sought to maintain a rigid separation between blacks and whites by banning racial intermarriage, establishing severe penalties for interracial fornication and adultery, and expressing repugnance for "commingling" of the races. In practice, however, only sexual relations between black men and white women were punished, while consensual or forcible sex between white men and black women was tolerated.[46]

While the masters of both Khadiga and Celia can be said to have raped their young slaves since their consent to sexual relations was not required, the transgression in both cases should be understood as a moral and ethical one and not a crime in the legal sense. Since Newsome was a Christian, his sexual relations with his slave would also be a religious offense since they occurred outside of a religiously sanctioned marriage and in a religious tradition that was strictly monogamous. Thus the racial basis of

slavery in the American South made it impossible for freed blacks to melt into the general population. In any case, manumission was discouraged, but if blacks were freed by their masters, their rights were limited by laws that banned them from schools and certain professions, forbade them from owning firearms, and limited or prohibited their physical movements.[47] Islamic law, on the other hand, permitted extramarital sex between a man and his concubine(s) and condoned plural marriage. Since there was also no racial basis for enslavement, it was relatively easy for a slave concubine and her children to be assimilated into a family, a household, and a society.

Although both Khadija and Celia began their lives as slaves in very similar ways—in the brutality and violence that characterized their displacement from their natal families and nonconsensual sexual intercourse—their paths diverged dramatically. If Khadiga bore her master children, and we have no evidence that she did or did not, they were born free.[48] As an *umm walad* (child's mother), she could look forward to remaining in the same household with the same master all of her life and probably to gaining her freedom upon his death, although this was not automatic. In the case of Khadiga, her master freed her and made her his legal wife. As a convert to Islam and a free woman, Khadija enjoyed the same rights as freeborn Muslim women including the right to a dowry upon her marriage and the right to own property. Celia, on the other hand, could have no such aspirations. The law did not protect her from abuse or mistreatment by her master nor did it mitigate her circumstances as the mother of her master's children. Bearing her master's children did not protect her or assure her of eventual freedom. Her children were born slaves, since they derived their status from her, not their father. They were illegitimate and had no claim on him or his property. As her owner, Newsome could sell her at any time or sell her children away from her. The law could not help her. No New World slave society granted freedom automatically to slaves who bore their masters' children, and the findings of many scholars demonstrate that most female slaves who had sexual relations with free men were never freed.[49]

There are several reasons why the lives of Celia and Khadiga would end so differently even though they shared the experience of being slaves. The New World system of slavery and particularly that of the American South was primarily based on large-scale plantation agriculture and on a legal

system that viewed the slave as property or chattel. Slavery was also a category reserved for Africans and their descendants; thus there was a racial dimension to slavery that did not exist in the Middle East. The color line was also the boundary between enslaved and free, making it difficult for manumitted slaves to assimilate into white society after they gained their freedom. Legally, the slave was regarded as the subject of a master rather than as the subject of a state.[50] The role of the courts and the law was, therefore, circumscribed, and judges expressed their reluctance or inability to come between an owner/master and his property/slave. The law as well as prevailing custom and ideology gave the master a great deal of arbitrary power over his slaves. All of this, taken together with the inheritance of slave status through the mother, meant that enslaved Africans and their descendants could not reasonably hope for manumission or assimilation for themselves or their children.

In the Middle East, on the other hand, military/household slavery emerged at a time when the rulers of a far-flung Islamic empire needed trained and loyal troops and civil servants to defend and manage the state. The empire was the Abbasid of the ninth century when the state was at the apex of its power and the capital at Baghdad was a dynamic center of intellectual and artistic activity. South of the capital, in the marshes at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, a violent and prolonged rebellion of East African slaves was taking place, leaving the Arabs with a distaste for the gang slavery that the cultivation of crops on large plantations demanded. Also in the ninth century, the four Sunni schools of law were evolving into a system of jurisprudence whose origins were believed to be divine and whose authority came from the Qur'an and the *hadith* (the sayings and doing of the Prophet Muhammad). Were these three events unrelated or did they converge to shape a system of slavery that was smaller in scale compared to the gang slavery of Rome or the New World and a body of law to regulate its practice that was geared toward manumission and assimilation? In any event, the law concerning slavery facilitated the assimilation of slaves into families and households, which was particularly useful to ruling elites, who could use slavery as a way to create loyal and faithful servants and expand their network of kin and clients. Also, the Islamic legal system was a key institution in a centralized state that oversaw

the training and supervision of judges and the courts. All persons within the Dar al-Islam, free and enslaved, came under the jurisdiction of the Islamic legal system, which made the master's power over his slaves less arbitrary and more constrained. Through the legal recognition of concubinage, particularly, the lines between slave and free became blurred. A concubine's children by her master were born free and she and her children were part of his household as were his legal wives and their children. In addition, a master was bound by law to provide both his concubines and his wives a home and maintenance. All freed slaves remained in a state of clientage *(wala')* for the rest of their lives to the master who freed them. On both sides, patron and client, the relationship was inheritable by the descendants, with patronage passing to the eldest male kin of the master or mistress who performed the original manumission. As Joseph Schacht observed, "The Islamic law of slavery is patriarchal and belongs more to the law of family than the law of property."[51] In other words, a society could construct and enlarge its kin groups through slavery as well as marriage.

By the eighteenth century, household slavery was a thousand-year-old practice that remained predominantly a system for the creation of a military and bureaucratic elite and for the provision of concubines and wives to that elite. Mamluks of eighteenth-century Cairo imported their slaves mostly from Georgia and Circassia and assimilated them into their households. The acquisition of slaves allowed a master to expand his household, which was the basis of power in the Mamluk system of politics. Indeed, the household was expanded chiefly through the acquisition of slaves since the Mamluk system preferred that men who had once been slaves ascend to positions of power in the hierarchy. Freed male slaves remained clients of their master and often married their master's freed female slaves. Both clientage and marriage strengthened the links between male members of the household.

Since there was a Mamluk preference for reproduction through the acquisition of slaves rather than through birth, there was less pressure on Mamluk women to produce sons and heirs. This preference is very different from the nineteenth-century American South where an increase in the slave population was achieved through slave-breeding, making sexual relations with a female slave and her capacity for reproduction an economic issue.

This dimension of slavery in the American South was an important element in the trial of Celia for the murder of her master. It was almost a foregone conclusion that Celia's attorney would not be able to convince the trial judge or the jury that she had the right under Missouri law to defend herself against rape. Such a conclusion would have undermined the legal and social basis of slavery by making a black slave equal to a white woman and by denying a master control over a female slave's sexuality and reproduction.

Life after Slavery

Both Islamic law as it pertained to slavery and the structure of the Mamluk household meant that Khadiga's life in Cairo as a slave and a freedwoman had the potential to be very different from that of Celia's in nineteenth-century Missouri. Indeed, Khadiga's religious endowment testifies to the way in which she was assimilated into the ruling elite as the concubine and wife of an amir, into Islamic society as a Muslim, and into Cairo's economic life as the owner of lucrative, income-producing real estate. In a revealing stipulation in her endowment deed, which listed the property she was placing in the trust, the witnesses to the deed, the heirs to the income of the trust, and the appointment of an administrator for the trust after her death, Khadiga left us some insights and some tantalizing questions about her life as a slave and a freedwoman and her adaptation to life in Cairo. In her deed, Khadiga stipulated that the administrator *(nazir)* of the endowment of her deceased husband, Ahmad Katkhuda, should go to Georgia and purchase a slave/concubine *(jariyya)* of Georgian nationality. Khadiga wanted the slave be of good character so she required the unnamed *nazir* to look for a slave who was proper in the practice of her religion and in her everyday life. If the woman was found to be dishonorable, the *nazir* was ordered to sell her and buy another. If, on the other hand, she had the qualities mentioned above, he must manumit her and marry her. The price of the slave was set aside for this purpose. The point of the *nazir*'s journey to Georgia, his purchase of the slave, and their eventual marriage was that this woman, once married and freed, would become the administrator *(nazira)* of Khadiga's endowment. Through this stipulation, Khadiga ensured that after her death, a husband and wife with whom she shared

Georgian ethnicity, the experience of slavery and manumission, and the conversion from Christianity to Islam would manage her and her husband's endowments. The post of administrator *(nazir)* was a responsible one that carried with it a salary paid out of the income of the endowment. The administrator had to manage the endowed property responsibly so that it would continue to produce income, allocate the income to the heirs or the good works stipulated by the donors, and in general fulfill the wishes of the donors as recorded in their endowment deeds.

Certainly this remarkable story tells us a great deal about the importance of ethnicity and marriage in creating strong bonds among the members of a Mamluk household. The fact that Khadiga and the slave woman would share the same ethnicity and that the slave would be assimilated into the household as a wife and a freed woman made the links stronger and increased the likelihood of loyalty and fidelity. It also seems that Khadiga lived in two worlds simultaneously, worlds that were linked and that overlapped: Georgia and Cairo, Christianity and Islam, slave and free.

Khadiga's life and the lives of women like her would seem to contradict Patterson's assertion of the social death of all slaves. According to Patterson, the slave was a social nonperson and a socially dead person who became an object when stripped of social identity in the natal group.[52] "Alienated from all 'rights' or claims of birth, he ceased to belong to any legitimate social order. All slaves experienced, at the very least, a secular excommunication."[53] While this assertion might apply to slaves in the New World who were property and as such subject to the control of their master and outsiders with no ties to the dominant society and no legal rights, it does not have much explanatory power for slaves like Khadiga.[54] It is more useful to take an anthropological perspective and consider slavery in the Islamic world as an issue of rights-in-persons.[55] From this perspective, slavery is one of several possible relationships involving rights-in-persons and coercion including others like marriage, parentage, and guardianship. Thus, as a father with rights in his daughter, Khadiga's father had the right to arrange her marriage at age thirteen or fourteen or to sell her into slavery. If her father had chosen marriage for his daughter, Khadiga would have left her natal family; joined the family of her husband, who might be complete strangers to her; and eventually, through marriage and the

birth of children, be assimilated into her husband's kin group. If, however, Khadiga's father chose to sell her into slavery, she would have been required to leave her natal family, submit to sexual intercourse with a man she had not chosen and who did not require her consent, and as his consort and later wife integrate herself into his network of (fictive) kin. In other words, the violent wrenching away of human beings from their natal families and kin, their subjection to the authority and control of a husband or master, and the sometimes arbitrary nature of that control were not reserved for slavery and the master/slave relationship but were part of many women's lives within their own families. And in either case, as a wife in Georgia or a slave in Cairo, Khadiga's male partner was likely to have been a Georgian like her if, as the available evidence suggests, the majority of slaves in eighteenth-century Cairo came from the Georgian region of the Caucasus. The social group from which she was torn by slavery was reconstituted in Cairo in the households of the Mamluks, and her continued identification as a Georgian is evident in the stipulation she made to her endowment.

Khadiga's life as an eighteenth-century woman spanned a continuum of constraints on her personal freedom. However, slavery was not at the end of the continuum, as it was for Celia, but closer to the beginning. Khadiga probably lived most of her life as a free woman rather than as a slave and as a wife rather than as a concubine. Her personal attributes, the master who bought and owned her, the status and wealth of his household, the Islamic legal system, and the Mamluk style of slavery all helped to shape the destiny of the young slave from Georgia and her eventual transition from enslavement to freedom.

4

The Mamluk Household

How a House Became a Home

The fate of women slaves from the Caucasus and Georgia was contingent on many factors—their purchase as household servants or concubines, the status and wealth of their owner, the treatment meted out to them by their masters or mistresses, and their own ability to use their talents and skills to advance themselves within the household. If, like any of the manumitted Georgian slaves whose lives are revealed to us in their religious endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)*, they were purchased by high-ranking Mamluk amirs as their own concubines or as potential wives of clients or dependents of the household, they would have the opportunity to achieve rank and high status, amass wealth, and enjoy a high degree of autonomy in some aspects of their daily lives.

One of the keys to understanding the position of women slaves and manumitted slaves as well as the political, social, and cultural life of eighteenth-century Cairo is the household. From the time of the Mamluk resurgence in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the households of the beys were the primary mechanism for acquiring, expressing, and reproducing power. The Mamluk system of the early modern period was a throwback to the earlier Mamluk polity of the medieval period in many respects, particularly in the way it reproduced itself from generation to generation and achieved longevity. The successors of the Mamluk sultans from the medieval period to the Ottoman conquest of 1516–17 and to the leaders of the beylical households from the late seventeenth century to the Napoleonic invasion of 1798 were not primarily their biological sons but rather men with slave origins.[1] The Mamluk system was predominantly a slave system

in which those men with origins as slaves could aspire to power within this household system of politics.

What has been overlooked in the discussion of the Mamluk revival and the composition of the Mamluk households is the slave origins of the women who were incorporated into the households as concubines and wives as well as the contributions women made to the household's cohesion and continuity and the reproduction of its power. A survey of the religious endowments *(awqaf,* sing. *waqf)* made by women in the eighteenth century shows that the overwhelming majority of women who can be identified by their names as belonging to a Mamluk household had slave origins while the minority were freeborn daughters or sisters of Mamluks. The purchase of female slaves as concubines or wives was not a random act by the Mamluks but was rather a conscious strategy to maintain the separation of the Mamluk elite from the Egyptian population and to make their households more cohesive. For women, incorporation into a household was the first step toward achieving wealth, status, and influence within the household and in the wider society.

As the index to the eighteenth-century religious endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)* show, women who had origins as slaves had by far the largest and most lucrative endowments, in terms of the number and type of properties endowed. Of the three women whose lives provide a female genealogy of the revival, expansion, and decline of the Mamluks and whose religious endowments testify to their wealth and prominence, only one, Amina Khatun, was a freeborn daughter, of Hasan Gurbagi al-Qandaggi (d. 1716). Her three husbands were, consecutively, Hasan Katkhuda, one of the favorite *mamluk*s of the founder of the Qazdughli household, Mustafa Katkhuda al-Qazdughli; 'Uthman Katkhuda, one of the wealthiest and most powerful Mamluks of the period; and Sulayman Gawish, both of whom were *mamluk*s of her deceased husband Hasan Katkhuda. The other two women, Shawikar Qadin and Nafisa al-Bayda, were concubines and later wives. Shawikar was the concubine of 'Uthman Katkhuda and later the wife of Ibrahim Katkhuda, the architect of the Qazdughli household's rise to dominance. Thus Amina and Shawikar had a sexual relationship with the same man, as wife and concubine, respectively. Nafisa was the concubine and wife of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, the favorite *mamluk* of Ibrahim

Katkhuda and his heir as head of the Qazdughli household. After 'Ali Bey's death, she married Murad Bey, whose death in 1801 during the French occupation of Egypt marked the end of the Mamluk system.

The lives of these three women demonstrate how women in the Mamluk household contributed to its cohesion and stability as well as to the reproduction of its power from generation to generation. Because of their longevity compared to men who were more likely to be killed in the internecine warfare that marked the century, women became living symbols of lineage continuity. As widows who remarried, they legitimized their husband's assumption of power as the new head of the household, as Shawikar did when she married Ibrahim Katkhuda. They also brought their own often considerable wealth to their new husband and his household. Women as members of Mamluk households not only benefitted from their membership in the household but also contributed to its continuity, longevity, and the reproduction of its power.

The Evolution of the Mamluk Household

When the Mamluk system began to reassert itself in the late seventeenth century, there were various households vying for power. The two most prominent households, both of which emerged from the beylicate, were the Faqariyya and the Qasimiyya, founded by Dhu al-Faqar Bey and Qasim Bey, respectively. In 1711 there was a civil war between Ottoman forces and various Mamluk factions that led eventually to the beylicates's absorption and domination of the military corps. The rivalry between the Qasimiyya and the Faqariyya ended with the defeat of the former through an alliance between the Faqari and the Qazdughli *bayt*. The Qazdughli *bayt,* which would dominate the eighteenth century, emerged from the military corps, not the beylicate. It was founded by Mustafa Katkhuda, who rose to *agha* of the Janissaries before his death in 1703–4. In 1739 the last Faqari amir, 'Uthman Bey, was driven from power by an alliance between Ibrahim Katkhuda Mustahfizan and his partner in a duumverate, Ridwan Katkhuda 'Azaban, head of the Julfiyya *bayt*. It was Ibrahim Katkhuda who, between 1748 and his death in 1754, laid the foundations of Qazdughli power for the rest of the century.

By the mid-eighteenth century after a series of bloody battles among the various Mamluk households, the Qazdughli household *(bayt)* emerged as the most powerful. Between 1760 and 1772, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, who was purchased as a *mamluk* and trained in Ibrahim Katkhuda's household, became the leader of the Qazdughlis and succeeded in eliminating his rivals and consolidating power within his own household. Also around mid-century, the process began of fusing the military institution founded on the regiments (*ojaq*s) and the Mamluk organization dominated by the beylicate. The result was one system in which service in the regiments became a career path within the revived Mamluk system. As Raymond has pointed out, by the end of the century, almost all the positions in the Ottoman hierarchy were held by members of the Mamluk households.[2] In 1798, Ibrahim Bey described the ruling class as a unique system in which the beys, *kashif*s, *mamluk*s, and officers and soldiers of the regiments constituted a socially homogenous and hierarchical group.

While the Mamluk household was the foundation of the political system that usurped considerable power and revenue from the central Ottoman government at Istanbul, it was also a group of individuals linked together not just by political interests but also through marriage, concubinage, and both real and fictive kinship, in other words through the creation of family ties. Previous studies of the Mamluks both in their classical and resurgent phases have focused exclusively or predominantly on the household as a political entity. The objects of study were the sultanate or the beylicate, the recruitment and training of male slaves, the beylical or military households and the factions that formed within them, and the internecine fighting that was almost continual for the period of the revived Mamluk system. The view from this vantage point is that the system was generally unstable and liable to fragmentation and dissolution. As Peter M. Holt has noted, "The tendency toward fragmentation and factionalism is even more marked in the neo-Mamluk households since each Mamluk generation in turn founded new households, which, although part of the parent-clan, were rivals for political power and the spoils of office. It was this above all that delayed the revival of the beylicate in the eighteenth century, and rendered its paramountcy, when once acquired, so unstable and precarious."[3]

Also, Daniel Crecelius, whose *Roots of Modern Egypt* has traced the Mamluk usurpation of power from the Ottoman administration in Egypt, said that only the Mamluk tendency toward factionalism and self-destruction permitted the Ottoman regime to survive and to claim a semblance of authority.[4] Michael Winter, in describing the intense rivalry and extreme factionalism of Mamluk political culture, has written that the struggles were "fierce and bloody; personal, political and primarily economic interests were at stake."[5] One of the great unanswered questions, then, is how slave systems in general, not just Mamluk, lasted so long and were so predominant in the Middle East from the period of the Abbasid caliphate through the Mamluk sultanate and revival to the Ottoman empire.

In order to answer this question and to understand some of the inner workings of the Mamluk polity, we should turn our attention to the construction of the Mamluk family household, which was the foundation of the Mamluk system. Mamluk households not only recruited, trained, and deployed slaves and manumitted slaves, male and female, but also transformed them into kin, thereby creating horizontal and vertical links among their members that mitigated the tendency of slave systems to become unstable and factionalized. The creation of real and fictive kinship ties partially filled the power vacuum created by the absence of dynastic succession from the head of the household to his natural son and heir. Instead of the dynastic succession from father to oldest son that characterized many traditional monarchies in Europe and elsewhere, powerful beys raised their favorite *mamluk*s in their households, groomed them for power and succession, and married them off to their daughters, sisters, or female slaves. Such was the case with Ibrahim Katkhuda, the architect of the Qazdughli rise to power, who raised his favorite *mamluk* and successor, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, in his household. For his part, 'Ali Bey raised his successor Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab in his household and gave Muhammad Bey his sister in marriage. In this way, the fictive kinship created by slavery and the master/father–slave/son relationship was augmented by the real kinship ties established by marriage. These relationships were not by-products of the system but were intrinsic to it and were pursued as strategies to strengthen the household, enhance its cohesion, and consolidate its power.

The political households of the sort that wielded power in eighteenth-century Egypt had particular characteristics and were not just a random collection of men tied to each other through clientage and patronage. Political households were kinship-based systems centered in actual houses that were important symbols of their power; they had a leader at the head and a strategy for reproducing themselves and their power from one generation to the next. Members of households were related to each other not only through patron-client ties but also more importantly through real or fictive kinship. Inside these households, political life and family life were intertwined and inextricable. Marriages and other sexual alliances were political, as was reproduction. The kinship system, whether real or fictive, that bound members of the household together could not be created by men alone; women's acquiescence to the marital and sexual alliances arranged for them was crucial. Because family life and politics took place within the house/household, the concept of separate spheres—the private world of the family and the public world of politics—did not apply. Thus women could not be said to be confined to the private world of the home while men dominated the public world of politics and war. The multiple and overlapping dimensions of the political household provided a venue for women to advance themselves and to achieve considerable autonomy and influence. It is important to recognize the family dimension of the Mamluk household in order to understand how the personal was also political, how the ostensibly fragile Mamluk system could achieve cohesion and longevity, and how women were able to thrive inside a family where it was possible to obtain influence through sexual and family ties.

It is particularly important to think of the Mamluk system as a collection of political households in order to understand the multiple dimensions of women's role within the household and family and how women were able to acquire wealth and property and to attain influence and status within their households and the wider society. This appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon linked to political households in which women as members of powerful families and with a kin or sexual relationship with the head of the household or other powerful members were able to achieve high status, wealth, and influence. As we shall see later in this chapter, there are important similarities between Mamluk Egypt and a number of societies

including the Ottoman court of Sultan Sulayman, feudal Europe, and pre-evolutionary France that show how a woman's life was linked to the family/household and to sexual and kinship ties to the head of the household to which she belonged.

Bayt, or What's in a Name?

While the Mamluk system was a household-based political system, it was also a collection of families linked to each other in a complex web of inter-relationships. Thus the Mamluk household will be examined here as a collection of families linked together in a kinship system, both real and fictive, that was created through marriage and concubinage and reproduced primarily through slavery. Kinship construction was a conscious strategy pursued by the Mamluks to construct a lineage system within the household and to make the entire system of power more cohesive and less prone to factionalism and fragmentation. It is this dimension of Mamluk history, the history of the family, that has generally been neglected in studies of the Mamluk resurgence, although an analysis of the structure of the family and household is crucial to our understanding of the Mamluk polity.

Before attempting to reconstruct the eighteenth-century Mamluk family/household, it is necessary to define certain key terms that have been used to define components of the household and the household itself. At the outset, Mamluk family historians are confronted with a linguistic problem because the word *bayt* has been used interchangeably for the different elements that make up the Mamluk system. David Ayalon, relying on al-Jabarti, defined *bayt* as a group or a faction whose members were linked by Mamluk and family ties.[6] Because the term has been used to refer both to the household and to factions within a dominant household, this definition has led to confusion. Al-Jabarti referred to the factions as *'ashira* or *qabila,* thereby differentiating the larger entity of the household from the smaller factions formed within it. Differentiating households from factions and assigning them different words in Arabic allows us to be more precise in our analysis of the household.

Another difficulty, however, is that the word *bayt* has also been used simultaneously to define both the Mamluk system as a household-based

system of power and also as the households and families that made up this system. For the purpose of clarifying these terms and differentiating the various elements of the Mamluk system from each other, we should recognize the various overlapping meanings of the word *bayt* as house, household, and family. Thus, because the same word is used for these different forms and structures, the meaning of the word *bayt* depends on the context in which it is used. For example, the most comprehensive meaning of *bayt* is house, the household-based political system of the eighteenth-century composed largely of Mamluks who challenged the Ottoman administration for political and military power and control of the country's revenues. This system was composed of multiple households, individually known also as *bayt,* with each led by a dominant bey that vied with each other and the Ottomans for hegemony. There were various households competing for dominance until the rise of the Qazdughli around mid-century and its consolidation of power around 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and his successors.

We can conceptualize Mamluk households as composed of parent households presided over by dominant beys and including slaves, manumitted slaves, and followers. As the slaves were manumitted and took their places within the Mamluk hierarchy, they formed households of their own. For example, the Qazdughli *bayt* under 'Ali Bey al-Kabir would have included his own household plus all those of the beys, amirs, *katkhuda*s, *kashif*s, and other followers that together made up the entity known as the Qazdughli. It is only at this time that *bayt* could be defined in quasi-monarchical or dynastic terms as a house, such as the Ottoman or the Bourbon or even the Mamluk sultanate. This is because 'Ali Bey al-Kabir consolidated power in one house and established a clear line of succession to his *mamluk,* Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab. After the untimely death of Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab in 1775, power remained within the dominant Qazdughli household but was shared in a sometimes fragile alliance by three of the dominant amirs: Murad Bey, who was Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab's favorite *mamluk;* Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir; and Isma'il Bey. Thus we can see clear political factions emerging within the Qazdughli household around these three men. The factions emerged most strongly in 1786, when the Porte sent Hasan Pasha to Egypt to discipline the unruly Mamluks and restart the flow of revenue to the central government. The

pasha's ally was Isma'il, who was left in charge of the country when Hasan Pasha returned to Istanbul after a year. Isma'il's opponents, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey, had retreated to Upper Egypt when Hasan Pasha led Ottoman forces into the country. They bided their time for four years before moving against Isma'il, whom they defeated and sent into exile. Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey continued to share power as the dominant beys of the Qazdughli household until the French invasion of 1798.

The word *bayt* has also been used, however, not only to refer to the household but also to the family. Ayalon has pointed out that al-Damurdashi and Nicolas Turc used the word *'ila* (colloquial for *'a'ila* or family) simultaneously with *bayt,* thereby blurring the distinction between family and household.[7] This is not just a linguistic problem but a conceptual one as well. In Britain and France during the same period, there were similar difficulties in distinguishing between family and household. Jean-Louis Flandrin in *Families in Former Times* researched English and French dictionaries of the period for the meaning of *family,* which he found to be synonymous with *household*.[8] According to Flandrin, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the concept of family straddled the notions of co-residence and kinship. Thus a family could be an assemblage of residents of the same dwelling including both kin and nonkin such as servants or a set of kinfolk who did not live together, that is, an extended family composed of brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Other definitions of *family* were narrower. For example, Samuel Johnson in his 1755 dictionary defined family as only those who lived in the same house and gave as a synonym *household*.[9] Abel Boyer's *Dictionnaire royal francois* [*sic*] *et anglois* [*sic*] gave as the definition of *famille* "all those who lived in the same house, under the same head" and listed as English equivalents *family* and *household*.[10] The French *Dictionnaire de l'Academie* of 1694 defined *famille* as "Toutes les personnes qui vivent dans une même maison, sous un même chef."[11] Flandrin's definition is important because it emphasizes the fact that all those residing in the same house were subject legally and by social convention to the male head of the household. As Flandrin has written, "It was still the case in the second half of the eighteenth century, both in France and in England, and whatever the social milieu concerned, that the members of the family were held to include both the kinfolk residing in

the house and the domestic servants, in so far as they were all subject to the same head of the family."[12]

Edward Lane's monumental *Arabic-English Lexicon,* which was first published in the nineteenth century, includes words for household and family that are also seemingly interchangeable.[13] His definition of *'a'ila* is the following: "a family or household; a man's *'a'ila* is the persons whom he feeds, nourishes, or sustains; or the persons who dwell with him, and whose expenses are incumbent on him, as his young man, or slave, his wife, and his young child."[14] In both cases, Flandrin and Lane blur the distinction between family and household, which they conceptualize as all those for whom the male head of household is responsible.

In the early modern period, it seems that family and household were interchangeable, particularly when kin and servants resided with the head of the household, his wife, and his children.[15] Peter Laslett and Richard Wall in their now classic *Household and Family in Past Time,* published in 1972, defined the family as a co-resident domestic group.[16] In their definition, the members of the family included a man and his wife, their children, all resident relatives connected by blood or marriage, and finally the servants, all of whom were subject to the authority of the head of the household.[17] In defining the household, Laslett and Wall noted that in ancient English, the word *house* meant a physical structure as well as a line of people related to each other who did not necessarily reside with each other.

Since political households are the larger units within which families exist, it is important to distinguish between family and household, particularly in the case of the Mamluks, who had multiple wives, concubines, domestic and military slaves, and manumitted slaves and servants, not all of whom resided with him in the same house. Because the households were political, men and women could claim membership in a particular household such as the Qazdughli without actually residing with its head.

Laslett and Wall's definition of family and household are the most meaningful for scholars attempting to understand premodern elite households such as the Mamluk because it identifies the family, including the parents and their children, as the building block of the household, which also includes kin and servants. Thus all residents including kin and nonkin were subject to the authority of the head of the family.

Laslett discounted the importance of co-residence in defining the household, which corresponds closely to the structure of the Mamluk household since the wife or wives, children, concubines, manumitted *mamluk*s, dependents, clients, and kin of the head of the household did not necessarily live with him. Laslett's definition corresponds closely with the eighteenth-century Mamluk household because it is appropriate for political or dynastic households in which persons are linked to the household head in various ways including kinship and clientage, although they may have dwellings of their own. Manumitted *mamluk*s who formed new households and married established their own residences and purchased their own *mamluk*s. Yet they continued to be part of the parent household and remained linked to their master/patron as *walid* to *walad* (father to son).

For example, wealthy beys and amirs were known to construct separate houses for their wives. Al-Jabarti's obituary of Nafisa al Bayda, wife of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and wife of Murad Bey, related that 'Ali Bey built her a house in the most prestigious neighborhood of the time, Azbakiyya, and resided there with her.[18] While Nafisa continued to reside in the Azbakiyya house after her marriage to Murad Bey, he spent most of his time in his sumptuous palace at Giza, which he confiscated from the defeated amir Isma'il Bey and rebuilt and decorated.[19] According to al-Jabarti, Murad rarely crossed the Nile to the east bank where Nafisa continued to live, yet she was his wife and continued to be part of his household. Before marrying Nafisa, Murad had married Fatima, the widow of the amir Salih Bey, and lived with her in her deceased husband's house. Because Mamluk households certainly encompassed more than those persons housed under one roof, it can be defined in the following way: all those linked to the head of the household through slavery, service, marriage, or kinship (real or fictive); all those for whom the master has a financial responsibility or who are dependent on him for sustenance, but who do not necessarily reside with him. Thus the household was the larger entity since it encompassed all those linked to the master but not necessarily residing with him, while the family was the smaller entity that was constructed through marriage and concubinage and reproduced itself primarily through slavery.

There is also a materiality about the Mamluk household that should not be overlooked. As in Old English, which defined house as a physical

structure as well as a line of people related to each other, the Arabic word *bayt* also means house as a dwelling as well as a lineage system. Ayalon, writing about the differences between the classic Mamluk sultanate and the resurgent Mamluk polity of the eighteenth century, noted two important differences: the use of kinship terms to express vertical and horizontal relationships among the Mamluks and the importance of the *bayt maftuh,* or open house, which belonged to the head of a powerful Mamluk faction and served as the focal point and center of activity for his family and dependents. As Ayalon described it, it was "the headquarters in which assemblies and meetings were held, schemes and conspiracies hatched and from which orders for action were sent . . . For the family it was the apple of the eye, and for the enemy (or enemies) the main target for destruction."[20]

Al-Jabarti described the house of ʻAli Bey al-Hindi as a vast structure where he was able to assemble the followers and *mamluk*s of the *kashif*s who had been killed in one of the internecine battles that punctuated the eighteenth century.[21] Also, in his obituary of Ibrahim Bey, al-Jabarti said, "His house at Darb al-Gamamiz was open day and night."[22] As a commentary on the power that Mamluks were able to wield by the first half of the eighteenth century and the role of the house as a symbol of that power, the following story from al-Jabarti is instructive. In his obituary of the amir Ismaʻil Bey, al-Jabarti recounted the tale of a woman from Sharqiyya province whose cow was stolen while she slept. When she awoke and could not find the cow, she cried out that she would certainly go to Ismaʻil Bey and ask if it were possible to steal under his government. According to al-Jabarti, gaining access to Ismaʻil Bey was easy since he did not turn away any complainant or supplicant who appealed to him for assistance. The woman presented herself to Ismaʻil Bey, and he ordered that a letter be written to the governor of the province asking him to investigate the theft. He then ordered a military officer to take the letter to the governor and accompany the woman back to her village.[23]

In important ways, the house as a structure defined the household as a concept and a system. The beys at the pinnacle of the system were known by the location and size of their houses. A manumitted *mamluk* was fully adult and responsible when he split off from the parent household and moved to his own house with a wife, slaves, and servants of his own. When

the head of a powerful household died or was ousted from power in one of the internecine battles that marked the century, his house was taken over by his successor as were his widow and concubines. Thus, whether they lived under the roof of the head of the household or not, his dwelling formed the centerpiece of their daily lives, linked the various members to each other, and served as the material expression of their rank and status in society.

The Mamluk Family Form

The work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure traced the changes in European marriage patterns, family formation, and household types over time beginning in the early modern period. The results of their research into family forms were published initially in Laslett and Wall's *Household and Family in Past Time*. The most useful components of the research for historians and social scientists investigating non-European families and households are the methodology and the categories established by the Cambridge Group for classifying different types of family forms rather than for demographic purposes and family reconstitution for the periods studied.

One reason why Laslett and Wall is difficult to use for these purposes in the case of Mamluk Egypt or the Ottoman provinces before the mid-nineteenth century is the absence of the kinds of archival material used for demographic purposes by historians of the European family. These include primarily records of birth, marriage, and death as well as various other legal and institutional documents. The value to demographers, historians, and social scientists of records pertaining to birth, marriage, and death is that information about women and children is included; that researchers are able to come to certain conclusions about infant mortality, age at marriage, family size, mortality rates, and average age at death; and that scholars can trace the changes in the family and household over time. Because of the lack of such information in the Ottoman Empire until the censuses of 1885 and 1905 and in Egypt until the census of 1848, family reconstitution following the model of the Cambridge Group was not possible.[24] The Ottoman Empire undertook regular cadastral surveys but on the basis of households, not individuals, for taxation and conscription purposes. Also,

the surveys did not count women and children. Thus, until the nineteenth century, there was no tradition of recording vital events and there were no centralized birth, death, or marriage records.[25] Nevertheless, researchers of the Ottoman family have been creative in their use of court archives including religious endowments (*waqf,* sing.; *awqaf,* pl.), marriage records, dowries, property transfers, wills, and records pertaining to guardianship and divorce.

Another problem associated with the use of methods and categories devised for research on the European family is one that is connected to the periods being studied by European as opposed to Mamluk-era scholars. In general, the Cambridge Group was investigating the European family during the early modern period when monogamy was firmly established among the elite and household-based political structures were declining or had disappeared. By the eighteenth century in Western Europe, strong states under centralized, dynastic monarchies had emerged to supplant a decentralized political system of weak kings and feudal princes vying for power. Increasingly centralized and bureaucratic states were developing national armies, a unified system of law and justice, and tax collection by agents of the state. Even earlier, by the eleventh century, polygamy was disappearing through the intervention of the Catholic Church and the reforms of Pope Gregory VII (1073–85).[26] The nuclear family and the nuclear family household were increasingly the norm even for the wealthy, unlike the eighteenth-century Mamluk households in which polygamy and concubinage were the norm. Mamluks households are reminiscent of those in an earlier period of Western European history, namely the feudal period. However, although it may be tempting to classify the Mamluk-era polity as feudal, we should resist the temptation to do so. A strong, centralized, and bureaucratic state existed in the form of the Ottoman Empire of which Egypt was nominally a province. The Mamluk resurgence was based on the construction of households through which power was organized and expressed with the goal of usurping control and tax revenue from the Ottoman administration and military corps in Egypt. Also, while the feudal European elite were based in the countryside, the Mamluks were an urban elite headquartered in Cairo, even though the tax revenues that were supposed to flow to Istanbul and were diverted by the Mamluks came primarily from rural tax farms.

Although the various categories of family forms were devised by the Cambridge Group to describe the early modern and modern European family, these categories can be adapted and applied to the Mamluk household with useful results. Doing so not only expands our understanding of family formation among the Mamluks but also brings the Mamluk family and household into the realm of history rather than relegating them to the ahistorical category of Middle Eastern or Islamic exceptionalism.

The categories devised by the Cambridge Group to differentiate and classify family forms include the simple or nuclear family consisting of a married couple, a married couple with children, and a widowed person with offspring. This form is also known as a conjugal family unit (CFU). Together the members form a nuclear family household. Another category is the extended family household, which consists of a CFU with the addition of one or more relatives other than children living together, possibly with servants as well. A multiple or joint family household consists of two or more conjugal family units connected by kinship or by marriage. A multiple or joint family household extends laterally when it includes brothers, sisters, or cousins of the head of the household or his wife. Although the multiple or joint family form is based on monogamous marriage, it can be adapted to describe the Mamluk family/household. In other words, among the Mamluks, the lateral extension of the family would include the wives and concubines of the household head in addition to his family members such as brothers, sisters, or cousins.

Unlike the European multiple family household, the Mamluk household could contain up to four conjugal family units consisting of one man, his wives up to the legal limit of four, and their offspring and any number of nonconjugal family units composed of his concubines and their offspring. Also included in the household would be relatives including brothers and sisters as well as domestic slaves and household servants.[27] The multiple family household would have to include the master's concubines who bore his children. Even though there was no marriage contract between the master and his concubine, the master-concubine relationship was recognized by the law, which required the master to maintain his concubine and the children he sired with her. All children that resulted from this relationship and were recognized by him as his own were born free and inherited

shares of his property along with the children of his legal wives. For reasons already explained, the members of the household do not necessarily reside together. Each wife might have her own house, for example, and a man's concubines might be housed separately from him and his wives. In other words, the Mamluk family household was a collection of nuclear families created through marriage and concubinage that did not necessarily reside with each other but were linked to each other through a complex web of relationships including marriage, birth, kinship (fictive and real), slavery, clientage, and servitude.

Constructing Kin

The building block of the Mamluk political household was the family as described above, which was constructed primarily through slavery, not through biological reproduction. The Mamluks created and enlarged their households and reproduced their power primarily through the acquisition, training, and manumission of slaves. The primary purpose of Mamluk marriages was not to reproduce children and heirs but to create alliances and kinship networks that enhanced the system's stability and cohesion. Mamluk marriages did produce children, but male offspring generally were prohibited from inheriting Mamluk status or offices. Female children could retain their status through marriage to their father's favored *mamluk*s or allies.

Kinship construction began among men during their period of enslavement and continued through their lives after manumission. The strongest bond among male slaves was that of *khushdashiyya,* which referred to the horizontal link between men who were enslaved and manumitted together. Men who recognized other men as their *khushdash* were acknowledging the strong ties between them that were supposed to last for a lifetime. The most important vertical link between men was the one between the master *(ustadh)* and his *mamluk*s, which was also maintained after manumission.[28] The chronicles, travel literature, and the *Description de l'Egypte* abound in descriptions of the deference and respect due to a master from his *mamluk*s as well as the proper way to behave toward the master.

The Mamluk system that was constituted out of slavery appropriated to itself kinship terms to describe the relationship between and among men.

For example, *akh,* or brother, was used as a synonym for *khushdash.*[29] A master referred to his *mamluk*s as his sons (*awlad,* sing. *walad*) and they referred to him as father (*walid*). A man could refer to the *khushdashun* of his master as his uncles (*a'mam,* sing. *'amm*) and the patron of his patron as his grandfather (*jadd*). Earlier generations were regarded as the forefathers or ancestors (*aslaf*) of the present generation.[30] David Ayalon has noted that these kinship terms were not used during the classical period of the Mamluk sultanate but only during the later period of the Mamluk resurgence.[31] This is evidence that the creation of a fictive kinship system was a conscious strategy on the part of the Mamluks to create solidarity by constructing a fictive family.

The links between male slaves that were transformed in part through the language of kinship into a fictive family did not prevent the fraying of those bonds and the betrayal of one "brother" by another or a "father" by his "son." In 1773, for example, the dominant amir in Egypt, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, was betrayed by his "son," Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, whom 'Ali Bey raised in his household and promoted to increasingly powerful positions until finally, in 1764, in a ceremony at the citadel, 'Ali Bey elevated him to the rank of bey. Then, in 1773, 'Ali Bey made his fateful move against the Ottoman Empire. In a bid for independence from Istanbul and control over the eastern Mediterranean, he led his army into Palestine. Muhammad Bey, for reasons still unknown, declined to support his "father," who was grievously wounded on campaign in the desert and died later at his house in Azbakiyya. Muhammad Bey, previously designated by 'Ali Bey as his successor, took over the reins of power while acknowledging the Ottoman sultan as his suzerain.

In the past, scholars have focused exclusively or primarily on the male slaves who constructed and dominated the revived Mamluk polity of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[32] Uncovering evidence of internecine rivalries, betrayals, and rebellions by men like Muhammad Bey against their "brothers" or "fathers," these scholars developed a particular historical perspective that emphasized the Mamluk slave system's instability, lack of cohesion, and tendency toward fragmentation. Male slaves were the universal historical subject, and conclusions about the Mamluk system, the households, and their composition were based predominantly on

the life experiences of men as recorded in the chronicles and documentary archives of the period.

For example, as in his study of the origins of the beys from the ascendancy of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir to the 1798 French invasion, Piterberg demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of beys had slave origins.[33] Piterberg argues that the eighteenth-century Mamluk system relied primarily on the recruitment of slaves who were primarily Georgian in ethnicity. Piterberg's study, like others before it, uses male slaves only to determine the composition of the household, a subject of recent dispute among some Mamluk historians. Certain assumptions about the household flow from this perspective on Mamluk history, such as those mentioned above, while certain questions about the household remain unasked and unanswered: Were the women in the Mamluk households of slave origin? If the women in the household were not slaves but were drawn as marriage partners from the Egyptian elite, what effect if any would this have had on the way the household was constructed and reproduced itself? Were women merely appendages to male power or were they full members of the household who made certain contributions to its continuity, longevity, and reproduction?

It is clear that the view from the other side of the gender divide reveals a different if complementary history, and the reasons why that is so are quite complex. First, there is the need to establish that the women in the households of the beys and amirs were slaves and to demonstrate why their slave origins mattered in terms of a household's internal cohesion, stability, and reproduction. Subsequently, as women strengthened their position within the household through marriage, the accumulation of private wealth, and the construction of their own networks of manumitted slaves and clients, it will be clear that these strategies for personal survival and well-being had reciprocal positive effects on the household as a political system.

Evidence for the slave origins of the women of the Mamluk households comes from an analysis of eighteenth-century religious endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)* preserved in Cairo's Ministry of Awqaf as well as the ministry's index to the *waqfiyyat,* which shows that women made up 24.1 percent of the total number of donors. This figure relates only to the *waqfiyyat* in the ministry. There are additional *waqfiyyat* located in other archives in Cairo including the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya. Of the female donors, 54 of

126 can be identified as belonging to the Mamluk elite through their rela-
tionship to males belonging either to the military regiments (*ojaq*s) or to one
of the beylical households. Of these, 43 can be identified as former slaves
and only 11 as freeborn daughters and a sister of Mamluks on the basis of
their names. Women of slave origin are identifiable by the appellation *bint
'abd Allah* (daughter of God's servant) and the use of the word *ma'tuqa,* or
freed. A woman was called *bint 'abd Allah* because she did not have a Mus-
lim father and it was considered shameful to be without a father. On the
other hand, the freeborn daughter of a Mamluk grandee would be named
this way: Al-Sitt 'A'isha Hanim Bint al-Amir Ridwan Agha Ta'ifat Gamali-
yan.[34] 'A'isha is identified as the daughter of Ridwan, commander of the
Gonulluyan military corps known in Egypt as the Gamaliyan or Cameliers.

Of the 43 women who can be identified as former slaves through their
names in the *waqfiyyat,* 27 are called *al-bayda* (the white), indicating Cir-
cassian or Georgian origin; two are identified as nonwhite—*al-sawda* (the
black) and *al-samra* (the brown), indicating African origin—and 14 have no
designation as to color. One of the women of African origin is identified as
al-Hajja Maryam Khatun al-Samra, *ma'tuqat* al-Sitt Khadija Khatun Bint
'Abd Allah al-Bayda, *ma'tuqat* al-Amir Mustafa Bey Shahin. Translated,
her name means the following: al-Hajja Maryam Khatun, the brown, the
freed slave of al-Sitt Khadija Khatun, (who was) the freed slave of the amir
Mustafa Bey Shahin.[35] In this case, Maryam was the freed sub-Saharan
African slave of a woman who was herself the freed white slave of an amir.

As these figures show, the overwhelming majority of women in this
sample had origins as slaves and were Caucasian in ethnicity. These find-
ings for women support the evidence amassed by Piterberg for the slave
origins and Caucasian ethnicity of the men in the Mamluk households. As
for the freeborn women, it is important to note that they were all daughters
of Mamluks; none were Egyptians from the merchant/*'ulama* class. This
finding is highly suggestive. It indicates that the Mamluk grandees con-
sidered concubinage and marriage as part of a political strategy aimed at
strengthening the links between the members of the household and thereby
consolidating power. It is also clear from a reading of men's and women's
waqfiyyat that the Mamluk elite, both male and female, considered itself
as a ruling class/caste. Thus the importation of slaves and marriage to

members of the same ethnic group should be seen as strategies to mark and preserve the difference between the elite and the Egyptian population and to provide internal cohesion. This strategy is illustrated by the stipulation in the *waqfiyyat* of Khadiga Qadin, mentioned previously, that set aside funds to purchase a female slave from Georgia, where Khadiga Qadin originated. Once purchased, the female slave would be manumitted and married by the administrator of Khadiga's husband's religious trust. As a freedwoman and a convert to Islam, she would become the administrator of Khadiga's own religious trust. Through this stipulation, Khadiga was attempting to ensure that after her death, a husband and wife, both manumitted slaves from Georgia, would manage the trusts of herself and her husband. Khadiga's stipulation exemplifies the way that slavery, manumission, and Georgian-Mamluk identity melded to create an ethnically distinct ruling class and the strategies this class devised to reproduce itself in power.

Although the Mamluk households were headed by men, as was customary among other elite and nonelite Egyptians of this period and in early modern European households as well, women were members of the household and contributed to its political and economic viability in important ways. Although most of the scholarly literature to date has emphasized the tendencies of the households to fragment and dissolve, the centrifugal pressures produced powerful centripetal forces as well. Marriage and nonmarital sexual unions or concubinage were two of these, both requiring the participation if not the acquiescence of women. While men could strengthen the links between themselves through the construction of fictive kinship, the creation of a family required the marriage of a man and a woman who, very often, were both manumitted slaves of the same master. Thus the fictive link of father and son was strengthened by the actual bonds of kinship created through marriage.

Marriage among the Mamluks

Mamluk marriages were political affairs whose primary aims were to bind members of the same household to each other and to expand its power and influence. As al-Jabarti and the religious endowment deeds (*waqfiyyat*) demonstrate, heads of households arranged marriages between their

former slaves or between their favorites and their own relatives including daughters and sisters. The names of women recorded in their religious endowment deeds provide a genealogy of the donor that gives important information about their sexual and marital history. Consider the following example: "Al-Sitt Mahbuba Khatun Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda *ma'tuqat* Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir wa *zawjat* Isma'il Bey Kashif *ma'tuq* Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir." Mahbuba, the former slave *(ma'tuqa)* of Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir, was the wife *(zawja)* of Isma'il Bey Kashif, also a former slave *(ma'tuq)* of Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir, who arranged their marriage and provided a dowry *(mahr)* for his former slave Mahbuba.[36]

The consolidation of power in the Qazdughli *bayt* was the result not only of the elimination of the household's rivals through assassination or exile but also through marriage alliances. Ibrahim Katkhuda, the architect of the Qazdughli ascendancy, married his former slave, al-Sitt 'A'isha Qadin bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, to his favorite and successor 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. After 'Ali Bey's death, his successor, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, married 'A'isha Qadin, who as 'Ali Bey's first wife was his senior widow. Muhammad Bey also arranged marriages for the members of his household. He married his sister, Zulaykha Khatun, and the freed slave of his master, Amina Khatun, to his favorite, Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir. Muhammad Bey gave his freed slave, 'Arifa Qadin Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, to Ayyub Bey al-Kabir and another of his sisters to Yusuf Bey when he was raised to amir. Later Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir gave his sister to his favorite, Ibrahim Bey al-Saghir (the younger).[37]

Married women served to legitimize the succession of men to power, usually through remarriage to their husband's successor or to another Mamluk within the same household. Such was the case when 'A'isha Qadin married Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab after the death of her husband 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. In the first half of the eighteenth century, al-Jabarti recorded a case concerning 'Ali Bey Zulfikar of the Faqari *bayt* who was the former *mamluk* and treasurer of his master, Zulfikar Bey. He was also the *khushdash* of 'Uthman Bey Zulfikar. When Zulfikar Bey was murdered, 'Ali was elevated to the rank of bey and married Zulfikar's widow.[38] The relationship between these men was forged not just through the shared experience of slavery, manumission, and service to the same master but

also through marriages going back to the time of Isma'il Bey and his son
Iwaz Bey, one of the few recorded natural sons of an amir to join the ranks
of the Mamluks. Iwaz Bey arranged the marriage of his daughter to one of
his former *mamluk*s, Yusuf Bey. Later she married Salih Kashif, who was
part of the household of 'Uthman Bey Zulficar who was the *khushdash* of
'Ali Bey Zulfikar. The murder of Zulficar Bey set in motion the final defeat
of the Qasimi *bayt,* which organized the killing, and paved the way for the
ascendancy of the Qazdughli.

According to al-Jabarti, whose chronicle records the marriages and
remarriages of the amirs and their former *mamluk*s, the tendency of the
amirs to marry the widows of their predecessors or their deceased rivals
was particularly pronounced among the Qazdughlis. He said, "The *mam-
luk*s of the Qazdughlis marry their widows and establish themselves in
their houses."[39] A case in point comes from the life of Ibrahim Katkhuda,
the architect of the Qazdughli rise to power. After the death of Muham-
mad Shalibi al-Sabunji, Ibrahim appropriated his house at Azbakiyya and
married Muhammad Shalibi's widow to his treasurer. When his treasurer
died, Ibrahim married the widow to Husayn Agha, whom he named *kashif*
of Mansura.[40] Al-Jabarti wrote of Ibrahim Katkhuda that he married
many of his *mamluk*s to the widows of amirs who died or who were killed
in Mamluk infighting and settled them in the homes of the deceased.[41]
Thus long-term survival for the Mamluks was not only a matter of success
in the armed conflicts that marked the period but also of marriage and
legitimization.

The life of Shawikar Qadin, who began her life in Cairo as the favorite
concubine of one of the most powerful amirs of the time, 'Uthman Kat-
khuda, demonstrates that women not only played an important role in
legitimizing the succession of men to power but that they also became liv-
ing symbols of lineage continuity. Shawikar's life and marriages spanned
the crucial period of time when the Qazdughli *bayt* was emerging as the
most powerful household among the various Mamluks. She was the con-
sort, wife, and widow of the men who laid the foundations of Qazdughli
power, including 'Uthman Katkhuda and Ibrahim Katkhuda, and she sur-
vived them both. Shawikar, like other Mamluk wives and widows, pro-
vided through their longevity and multiple marriages important elements

of cohesion and continuity within their households. Thus she and other Mamluk women should be regarded as the female counterparts of the male *aslaf,* or ancestors, of the Qazdughli *bayt*.

During the period of the Mamluk sultanate, women played a similar role but with an important difference. According to Carl F. Petry, women became "living symbols of stability who might survive several generations of men cut down in their prime" and who often presided over their houses as dowagers.[42] In the period of the Mamluk revival, unlike the previous era, Mamluk widows were not allowed to become dowagers because they were not allowed to remain widows for very long. Women such as Shawikar could become living symbols of lineage continuity but through multiple marriages, not through widowhood. Undoubtedly this was because of the need of the eighteenth-century Mamluks to legitimize themselves and reproduce their power from generation to generation and also to make sure that a woman's property stayed within the same household and was not carried off through marriage to a rival household.

When a widow remarried, she carried with her to her new marriage the property she owned outright as well as any property she might have inherited from her deceased husband. In addition, a woman might be the administrator *(nazira)* of her husband's religious endowment *(waqf),* which gave her control over the disposition of the property as well as an income from the trust. Remarriage within the same household served not only to provide a somewhat orderly succession to power but also to maintain property within the same household. This was an important consideration in the zero-sum game of Mamluk politics. Mamluk women, as freedwomen and converts to Islam, enjoyed the same property rights that Islamic law guaranteed to freeborn Muslim women. As we shall see, Mamluk women used these rights to buy property and invest in Cairo's commercial economy, in the process amassing estates that in some cases rivaled those of well-to-do merchants of the period.

Mamluk women's access to money and property was contingent on their belonging to a household as a concubine or wife. As a concubine, a status regulated by Islamic law, it was the man's responsibility to provide support for her and her children. As a wife, she was entitled to a dowry and to support for herself and her children. As a widow, she was entitled to her

share of her deceased husband's estate. Through a series of multiple marriages, a woman like Shawikar could accumulate considerable assets that she could increase through the buying and selling of commercial real estate.

A Mamluk woman's rank and status were, therefore, linked to her membership in a household and to Islamic law, which gave her certain rights, particularly property rights. Women were important in the construction of alliances through marriage or concubinage. They could also enhance their standing within the household through the construction of patronage networks of slaves and manumitted slaves. Evidence of women's ownership of slaves comes from the chronicles and from women's religious endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)* in which women routinely named their slaves among their heirs and in some cases as the administrator *(nazira)* of the religious endowments *(waqfs)* after their deaths. For example, Shawikar Qadin stipulated in her *waqf* that after her death and the deaths of her children and grandchildren, her freed slave Mahbuba Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda should become the *nazira*.[43] Mahbuba eventually assumed this post according to the *waqfiyyat,* which noted her acting as administrator in the exchange of a piece of property in Shawikar's *waqf.* This is but one example of how Mamluk women used their wealth to benefit other women, including their female slaves.

Women like Shawikar purchased and freed female slaves not only to fill certain positions in their households but also to arrange marriages between their slaves and the freed male slaves of their husbands or other amirs. In the process, they created patronage networks such as those created by men with the same aims, to create bonds between the patron and her former slaves that extended beyond the period of servitude and to enhance the power and influence of herself and her household. As al-Jabarti observed of Jalila Khatun, "Most of the women of the amirs were among her slaves."[44] By placing women as concubines or wives in the households of various amirs, the patron had a constant source of information about affairs of those households that could be useful to her and to her husband.

However, the fundamental reason why women were able to achieve high standing, wealth, and a considerable degree of autonomy in Mamluk society was because of the household system of politics that characterized the Mamluk resurgence. The fact that women were able to achieve higher

status and more autonomy in political systems in which households were important loci of power appears to be a cross-cultural phenomenon noted and analyzed by historians of the Ottoman Empire and societies in Western Europe.

Suzanne F. Wemple, writing about Western Europe's first feudal age, which occurred after the fall of Charlemagne's empire in the ninth century until the mid-eleventh century, has shown that women possessed power and autonomy as members of families that exercised power and authority in the absence of a strong, centralized state.[45] In a political landscape of small principalities, or *seignories,* where authority extended only as far as a feudal lord could enforce his will, the women of these households could flourish. The conditions that allowed women to attain positions of power and accumulate wealth during this period derived from the nature of feudal relations, which were based on kinship, the lack of distinction between private and public authority, and their right to own and inherit property at a time when land was the basis of power. As Wemple has written,

> Endowed with their own property and rights to inheritance, secure in their marital status, women were equipped to act with power and decision in the fluid society of the first feudal age . . . Out of the ruins of the Carolingian state, the family emerged as the most stable and effective element in a troubled world. Profiting from the almost unlimited power of their families, women for two centuries were able to play a central political role. Since land has become the only source of power, by exercising their property rights, secured in the Carolingian period, a growing number of women appear in the tenth and eleventh centuries as chatelaines, mistresses of landed property and castles with the attendant rights of justice and military command, proprietors of churches, and participants in both secular and ecclesiastical assemblies.[46]

Writing about women in prerevolutionary France some five hundred years later, Sarah Maza has shown how women in the royal court, in fact the household of the king, were able to attain rank, wealth, and power because of their familial or sexual relationship to the monarch.[47] Maza argued that in the transition from prerevolutionary monarchy to republic, there was an ideological transformation as well, represented by scurrilous

attacks on public women in the royal courts, particularly the wives and mistresses of the kings. These attacks were the harbinger of the exclusion of women from public life in the postrevolutionary period. Maza focused on the court of Louis XVI and a scandal called The Diamond Necklace Affair. At the heart of the scandal were questions about the reputation of the king's wife, Queen Marie Antoinette, and allegations of sexual misconduct. The details of the affair are relatively simple and involve the purchase of an expensive diamond necklace by Cardinal Louis de Rohan for Queen Marie Antoinette in an attempt by the cardinal to gain high political office. After having met a woman he believed to be the queen in the gardens of Versailles, Rohan turned over the expensive necklace to a man purporting to be the queen's valet. In reality, the "queen" was an imposter, a prostitute named Nicole Le Guay, discovered, hired, and carefully coached for the occasion by a swindler named Jeanne de La Motte and her husband, Count Nicolas de La Motte, who masterminded the entire affair. The necklace was promptly taken apart and the individual diamonds were sold on the black markets of Paris and London. The king's decision to allow the miscreants to be prosecuted by the judges and lawyers of the *parlement*, rather than settling the matter privately, unleashed a torrent of abuse and slanderous allegations directed at the queen and her alleged misconduct, although there was clearly no connection between the queen and the parties involved.

Mining this story for meaning in the context of the dwindling days of the French monarchy, Maza concluded that it represented an attack on the public woman and the corrupting effects of female power on all of society. Particularly condemned in the texts written during and after the affair was the presence of female sexuality in the political realm. Maza noted that the attacks on Marie Antoinette's reputation were a continuation of similar critiques leveled at the mistresses of Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry. Maza argued that the attacks on women who had power and influence at court because of their sexual relationships with the monarchs took place in an ideological climate in which the overlapping of female sexuality and political activity had become a central metaphor for political decay. As Maza has written,

Metaphors of gender and sexuality should figure prominently in any interpretation of the ideological transition from Old Regime to revolutionary political culture. The 1780s and the 1790s in France, and later periods throughout Europe, witnessed the gradual demise of royal and aristocratic courts modeled on households—in which female rulers, relatives, and mistresses played a recognized (if limited) role—and the ascendancy of entirely masculine representative bodies. In other words, the male-female world of familial and sexual bonds represented by Versailles was overpowered by the all-male contractual universe of the revolutionary assemblies.[48]

Leslie Peirce in her study of women in the household of the Ottoman sultan between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries analyzed the political dynamics and structure of the royal harem that allowed royal women to achieve power and influence that extended beyond the harem walls.[49] The key institution was the sultan's household of which the harem was a part. In the hierarchy of the harem, the mother of the sultan *(valide sultan)*, as well as his favorite concubine *(qadin* or *khatun)* or wife were at the top. Also important were the sultan's sisters and daughters, whose importance increased when they made marriages to men of power and distinction. As with the court of the French Bourbons, the royal households represented the overlapping of sexuality with politics, and women with a kinship or sexual relationship to the ruler were in a position to attain influence, power, and wealth.

For example, Sultan Suleiman's wife, Hurrem, a slave of Polish origin, had considerable political influence in the royal court that she achieved and was able to wield because of her relationship to the ruler. Suleiman broke with precedent when he married Hurrem, his concubine, who became the first slave concubine in Ottoman history to be freed and made a legal wife of the sultan. Hurrem became the sultan's political confidante and was alleged to have used her influence on him to order the execution of Mustafa, his son by the concubine Mahidervan Khatun. As the oldest of Suleiman's sons, Mustafa, his putative heir, was the rival of Hurrem's sons for the succession to sultan. Hurrem, like Marie Antoinette, was not popular with the people, who believed that she had seduced and bewitched the

sultan and who objected to the sultan's attachment to one woman, which was considered unnatural and harmful.[50]

In part, the power of Ottoman harem women was derived from the reproductive politics of the era and the practice of open succession or the absence of succession from the sultan to his oldest son. In such a political environment, the mother of the reigning sultan and the mothers of his sons were able to exert influence on the sultan and to become powerful inside the royal court. The financial accounts of the sultan's household that record the stipends paid to the harem women demonstrate that women at the top of the harem hierarchy were able to acquire vast sums of money that many used in later life to do good works such as the building of mosques or kitchens for feeding the poor.[51] As Peirce has written, "In a polity such as that of the Ottomans, where the empire was considered the personal domain of the dynastic family, it was natural that important women within the dynastic household—in particular the mother of the reigning sultan—would assume legitimate roles of authority outside the royal household."[52]

The thread that connects feudal Europe, prerevolutionary France, the early modern Ottoman Empire, and eighteenth-century Mamluk Egypt is the household as the locus of political power. In these household-based polities, the lines between public and private either were nonexistent or were indistinct to the point that power and female sexuality could overlap. In such households, personal relationships with the monarch or to the household head based on kinship or sexual relations were important avenues to power and influence. As members of such households, women acquired rank, status, and access to wealth. As wives or concubines of powerful heads of households, they were also endowed with legitimacy, authority, and influence that extended beyond the boundaries of the household into the wider society.

Conclusion

Women were members of Mamluk households, although their presence was often overlooked by historians and their contributions generally disregarded. In fact, women were important in enhancing the continuity and stability of a household system that in the past was recognized as inherently

unstable and prone to disintegration. Women were expected to acquiesce to the marital arrangements that were made for them by their masters/patrons in order to create alliances and enhance their power. Marriage and concubinage were central to the Mamluk strategy of constructing real and fictive kinship systems that enhanced the stability and cohesion of their households and the Mamluk system generally. Within the household, women could amass large estates of income-producing property and create pious and socially useful endowments, such as Nafisa al-Bayda's *sabil-kuttab* (fountain and Qur'anic school) near the Bab Zuwayla gate, which brought wealth and prestige to their households. Women were also more likely to be living symbols of lineage continuity than men because they tended to outlive their masters and husbands, who either died of natural causes before their usually much younger wives or were killed like 'Uthman Katkhuda in the internecine warfare that characterized the century. Nafisa al-Bayda, for example, was a member of the Qazdughli household from the time of 'Uthman Katkhuda to the era dominated by her husband 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, and after his death to her second husband, Murad Bey, whose death in 1801 signified the end of the Mamluk period in Egypt. Also, married women served to legitimize the succession of men to power, usually through remarriage to their husband's successor or to another Mamluk within the same household. This remarriage occurred when the head of the household died or was killed in internecine warfare between the various Mamluk factions.

For the women, their membership in a Mamluk household was the primary means to attaining wealth and status within the household and in the wider society. As converts to Islam after their manumission and upon their legal marriages to Mamluk men, women were entitled to the same rights under the law as freeborn women, which gave them property and other rights, including legal personhood. Also, there was no demarcation between the public and the private spheres, so that family life and political life took place in the same domain. A woman was connected to the public sphere because of the personal, sexual relations between her and the head of the household and through the continuing bonds between her and her former slaves, whose marriages she might have helped to arrange and who became part of her patronage network afterward. As historians, Wemple, Maza, and Peirce describe European and Ottoman court culture and

women who were able to enhance their influence because of kin or sexual ties to powerful men—sultans, kings, or beys. Additionally, women seemed to have more power or influence when power was decentralized as in the household-based politics of the Mamluks rather than in highly centralized, bureaucratic societies with a clearly demarcated public sphere from which women could be excluded.

Life in Cairo: City, Neighborhood, Home

5

Mamluk Women and the Egyptian Economy

A Comparative Perspective on Women's Property Rights

Women who married into the Mamluk households of beys, *kashif*s, and high-ranking military officers were predominantly former slaves, sometimes the slaves of the men they married after manumission and conversion to Islam. As we have seen, as members of Mamluk households, they were able to amass considerable wealth, enjoy a high degree of personal and economic autonomy, and achieve high status and influence within the Mamluk system and even in the wider society.

Although the women in the Mamluk households might have begun their lives as concubines, they sometimes married either their masters or men chosen by their master from the men in his household. Before marriage was possible, however, the master had to free his concubine, who, upon obtaining her freedom, converted to Islam. As free women they were entitled to the same rights and were bound by the same duties as freeborn Muslim women, meaning that they enjoyed the right to own property and were regarded under the law as individuals with separate legal personalities. As such, they could own property in their own right and had the power to make binding legal contracts without the approval of a father, husband, or guardian. Thus a woman's ability to amass wealth and purchase property was not only due to her incorporation into a Mamluk household, but also to Islamic law, which gives women the legal right to own property and legal personhood under the law. Islamic law, unlike eighteenth-century

common law, which prevailed in England and in the colonies of North America, did not conflate the personhood of wife into that of her husband, thereby making it impossible for a married woman of any class including the elite to own property or make a contract. Under common law, unlike *shari'a*, a married woman was under the perpetual guardianship of her husband and could not act legally in her own right. In other words, the law kept her in a childlike state and she could never, as long as she was married, achieve her legal majority. Although Muslim women of all classes enjoyed rights that would not be accorded to English or American women until the late nineteenth century, male travelers to the East routinely misrepresented the status of women as approaching the level of slaves, that class of persons held as chattel by their owners.

Travelers' Tales

The Comte de Volney, who visited Egypt and Syria between 1783 and 1785, attributed what he considered the miserable condition of women to Muhammad and the Qur'an for not doing women the honor of treating them as part of the human species. He also claimed, incorrectly, that the government deprived women of all property and personal liberty and made them dependent on a husband or father, which he described as slavery.[1]

C. S. Sonnini, who visited Egypt between 1777 and 1778, described the women of the Mamluks as "[p]erpetually recluse, or going out but seldom, and always with a veil, or, to speak more correctly, with a mask which entirely covers their face . . . And for whom are so many charms thus carefully preserved: For one man alone, for a tyrant who holds them in captivity."[2]

It was not uncommon for male travel writers in the eighteenth century to describe Mamluk women as slaves or captives of lascivious men who valued them for their sexuality and beauty. Going against this current in the travel writing of the period is the remarkable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose descriptions of Ottoman women were contained in a series of letters to friends and family in England between 1716 and 1718. As the daughter of an earl and the wife of Edward Montagu, the English ambassador to the

Sublime Porte, Lady Mary was invited into the most private spaces in Istanbul, the *haramlik*s (harems) of high-ranking women, including the widow of a sultan, spaces that, as Lady Mary remarked, would be off-limits to foreign Christian men.

Lady Mary was a perceptive and empathetic observer, particularly of women's lives, and her letters from Istanbul stand in startling contrast to the writings of her male compatriots, for whom she had a great deal of contempt. In a letter to Anne Thistlethwayte dated April 1, 1717, she wrote, "You will perhaps be surprised at an account so different from what you have been entertained with by the common voyage-writers who are very fond of speaking of what they don't know."[3] The difference between Lady Mary's views of Ottoman women and those of male travelers to the empire can be seen in the use of enslavement to describe the condition of women. Male writers like Sonnini and Volney used images of captivity and enslavement to describe Mamluk/Muslim women, although some of the women they observed might have been freeborn and others, slaves. Although slave was a legal category of persons whose treatment was regulated by Islamic law, Europeans like Sonnini and Volney used enslavement metaphorically to describe the condition of harem women as a group. Slavery was for them a way to convey to their readers their view of women as virtual prisoners in their harems, without rights and existing as objects of male lust. On the other hand, Lady Mary before her marriage to Montagu described herself and other women of her class as virtual slaves who were sold into marriage by their families,[4] but she described Ottoman women, many of whom had actually been slaves before their marriages to men of rank, as "the only free people in the empire."[5] How do we disentangle this seeming web of contradictions?

First, statements like those of Sonnini and Volney demonstrate an ignorance of Islamic law and women's rights under the law and can generally be discounted. Then we should attempt to understand why an apparently privileged and titled woman like Lady Mary would lament her condition as a virtual slave in contrast to Ottoman women whom she described as the freest persons in the empire, when some of them, like Sultana Hafisa, whom she visited, had actually been slaves before their marriages. For Lady

Mary the dividing line between virtual slavery and freedom was a woman's right to own property. The letter in which she described Ottoman women as the only free people in the empire was written to her daughter Lady Mar in April 1717. In it she recounted how the concealing dress of Ottoman women gave them more freedom of movement than Englishwomen of their class and even the opportunity for assignations with men not their husbands. Lady Mary pointed out that "'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street."[6] However, for Lady Mary the most important difference between Englishwomen and Ottoman women was property ownership. As she wrote to her daughter, "those ladies that are rich having all their money in their own hands, which they take with 'em upon a divorce with an addition which he is obliged to give 'em. Upon the whole, I look upon the Turkish women as the only free people in the empire."[7]

In order to comprehend how property rights empowered women or, conversely, how the lack of those rights disempowered them, it is instructive to compare English common law to Islamic law and the life of Lady Mary to women like Khadiga Khatun and Shawikar Qadin. The lack of property rights and legal standing caused Lady Mary to compare herself to a slave and her father to a slave master while Ottoman and Mamluk women once manumitted were able to exercise their legal rights to buy property and amass estates of considerable size and value. In the case of Mamluk women, property rights enhanced their status and their standing within their households and gave them some protection from the internecine struggles that took the lives of their masters or husbands or relegated them to exile in Upper Egypt. While the property of the men, their tax farms, and their positions in the Mamluk hierarchy were confiscated and given to the victors, women's property was legally untouchable if it was owned in their names and, in the cases under review here, was protected as a religious trust *(waqf)*. Lady Mary, whose married life was difficult and unfulfilling, understood very quickly upon her arrival in the empire and particularly after meeting women of rank and privilege that the difference between her life and theirs was attributable to the law and how it treated women, particularly in regard to property rights.

Women and Property in Comparative Perspective

Lady Mary was born into the English aristocracy in 1689 as the daughter of an earl, Lord Dorchester. Given her birth into a wealthy and powerful family, it was not predictable that she would one day be cut off by her father and reduced to pleading with her well-to-do husband for housekeeping money. On the other hand, it was unlikely that women like Khadiga Khatun or Shawikar Qadin, possibly the daughters of poor peasants who sold them into slavery, would emerge as members of the elite and large-scale property owners in their own right. The factor that most influenced the different life paths of Lady Mary and Mamluk women of the same period is Islamic law, which accords to women their separate legal personality as well as their right to own property. This exceeds other factors such as individual character traits and personal attributes, the role played by unforeseen circumstances sometimes called chance or fate or luck, and the social and cultural differences between the societies where either common law or Islamic law prevailed.

For her part, Lady Mary had the good fortune to be born into a wealthy family that allowed her to become educated and to develop into an avid reader who moved in intellectual circles. At her father's home, she met men like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele as well as William Congreve. As an adult, she corresponded with the poet Alexander Pope until their falling out for reasons that remain unclear.

When she was fourteen years old, she met the twenty-five-year-old Edward Montagu, whose grandfather was Edward, the first Earl of Sandwich. The two had corresponded for seven years when Montagu asked for her hand in marriage. Lady Mary's father agreed but the engagement foundered when Montagu refused her father's demand that he entail his landed estates on his eldest son. Lord Dorchester also wanted his prospective son-in-law to provide a town residence for Lady Mary. Although Montagu was prepared to make provisions for his wife, he refused to accede to Dorchester's demand that he settle his property to his eldest son. For Montagu this was a matter of principle since his eldest son might be unworthy to inherit it. Although entail was common, there were those who, like Montagu,

believed that this practice had deleterious effects on family life as well as on the society as a whole.[8]

Montagu also had strong views on the subject of marriage settlements, which were published in the September 12, 1710, edition of the *Tatler*. In his essay, Montagu compared the settlement of property on a woman by her prospective husband to "robbery," undertaken by the father who uses his daughter's beauty as a means of coercing her lover into making a large settlement. Montagu ended his essay with the hope that the legislature would remedy this situation by fixing a marriage price depending on whether the woman was a maid or a widow so "that there should be no frauds or uncertainties in the sale of our women."[9]

Like Montagu, Lady Mary believed that marriage among members of their class was tantamount to the sale of women, and she used the word *slavery* to express her sentiments. In a letter to Montagu dated November 1710, Lady Mary wrote, "since I am so unfortunate to have nothing in my own disposal, do not think I have any hand in making settlements. People in my way are sold like slaves; and I cannot tell what price my master will put on me."[10]

Although Lady Mary wrote Montagu breaking off all relations with him, he refused to give up corresponding with her or hoping to marry her. In the early summer of 1712, she agreed to accept a suitor chosen for her by her father, but at virtually the last minute, she refused to go through with the marriage. Her father threatened to exile her to his estate in the north of England and further promised that he would not approve her marriage to any other suitor or make another settlement or leave her anything but a small annual income in the event of his death.[11] Alarmed at the prospect of her exile to a remote corner of England, the pair, failing to receive Dorchester's consent to the marriage, decided to elope, which meant that she was penniless when she married Montagu as she pointed out to him in a plaintive letter before their marriage: "Tis something odd for a woman that brings nothing to expect anything; but after the way of my education, I dare not pretend to live but in some degree suitable to it. I had rather die than return to a dependency upon relatives I have disobliged. Save me from that fear if you love me."[12]

In the end, Lady Mary would be disappointed: Montagu was remote, seemingly uncaring, absent for months at a time, and increasingly miserly as he grew older. Eventually she and Montagu would live apart from each other, she on the continent and he in England.

Women, Property, and English Common Law

Lady Mary's predicament was due to the fact that the law in eighteenth-century England did not accord women property rights or even a separate legal personality. Under English common law married women could not own property and, therefore, could not make contracts on their own. Once she was married, a woman's real property became her husband's to manage.

The law made a distinction between real property including land and improvements and personal property (chattels personal or corporeal chattels) including farm implements and livestock as well as household furnishings and clothing. A woman's real property came under her husband's control but not his legal ownership. He had the sole right to manage the property and the right to receive and use all the rents and profits from it, but he could not sell it without her consent.[13] Although common law granted women some protection for their real property, their personal property became the husband's absolutely upon their marriage. W. S. Holdsworth, in his *A History of English Law,* described the law's conception of marriage as "a gift of the wife's chattels to her husband."[14] As Sir William Blackstone, the noted eighteenth-century English jurist, said, "By marriage the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended, or at least it is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything and she is therefore called in our law a *feme covert*."[15]

As a *feme covert,* a married woman could not own any personal property except clothing and personal ornaments, could not control her real estate, could not make a contract in her own name, and could not own a business. The law placed the wife under the guardianship of her husband and made him legally responsible for her. Under common law, the property

that a woman possessed or was entitled to at the time of her marriage or any she acquired after her marriage became her husband's to control. A saying attributed to Justice Blackstone that summarized the law's conception of married woman is: "In law, husband and wife are one person and the husband is that person." Justice Blackstone explained that women could not make contracts because of the "unity of person" that marriage under common law produced.[16] Thus, according to Blackstone, a man who made a contract with his wife would in fact be contracting with himself.[17] The only way a woman could be recognized as a separate legal person—a *feme sole*—was by remaining a spinster, becoming a widow, or securing her husband's permission to act as a *feme sole*. In other words, women living under common law were disadvantaged regarding property ownership because they were married, not because they were women.

If a wife survived her husband to become a widow, her real property reverted to her control absolutely. She also enjoyed a life interest in one-third of the freehold lands that had been in her husband's possession at the time of the marriage, a right granted to women in the fifteenth century. A woman could give up this life interest or dower for what became known as a jointure, a settlement of property upon her for at least her lifetime.

Jointures were made possible through equity jurisprudence in the Chancery Courts, which allowed the creation of a special category of property, the so-called special property or separate estate of married women. The Chancery Courts heard cases involving contracts and torts that could not obtain justice in common law courts. From the sixteenth century on, equity law and Chancery provided the propertied classes with the legal means to settle property on women that would be for their separate use, with the consent and approval of the husband.[18] The property settlement could be set up by any adult of sound mind including the woman herself, her relatives or friends, or her future husband. It was managed by a trustee appointed by the court. This, of course, is what Lady Mary would have received if Montagu had not quarreled with her father or if she had accepted the suitor chosen for her by her father. In his article in the *Tatler*, Montagu was objecting to the pressures placed on men to settle property on their prospective wives, which he decried as coercive and tantamount to robbery. Perhaps Lady Mary should have paid more attention to the

sentiments expressed by Montagu in this article, which seem to portend the character traits that made his wife so unhappy in their marriage.

As Susan Staves has pointed out, the aim in creating separate estates was to increase the security of the wife and minor children.[19] Further, when a father settled some of his property on his daughter in a jointure before marriage, he intended to ensure that his grandchildren would benefit eventually from the property and that it would not be swallowed up in the husband's estate. Lady Mary's father, looking ahead to his grandsons and great-grandsons, also demanded that Montagu entail his landed property on his male children. Lloyd Bonfield has pointed out that the period from 1650 to 1740 saw the rise of great estates and the concentration of land in fewer hands.[20] In his opinion, marriage was the single most important factor in the rise of these great estates because large estate holders with substantial rent tolls could offer more generous jointures and attracted brides with the largest portions.[21] Since portions increased the size of the groom's family estate, the net effect became cumulative so that a successful match in one generation enhanced the family's bargaining power in the next.[22] In order to keep the estate intact, members of the aristocracy and landed gentry practiced entail and primogeniture, which passed landed property and its income to the oldest male relative in the family line, most often the eldest son. This practice was supposed to prevent fragmentation of the landed property that was the chief source of wealth during this period. While some argued that entail and primogeniture were necessary for the creation and stability of the ruling class, others like Francis Bacon and Montagu argued that these practices had negative consequences for the owners and the property.[23] In contrast to English law, Islamic law works against the consolidation of property and inheritance through the male line by requiring the division of the deceased's property to both male and female heirs according to the relationship of the heirs to the deceased. In the case of women, their share is generally one-half a man's share.

The story of Lady Mary's life is the stuff of romance novels without the happy ending. It has all the elements, including the stern and unforgiving father, the threat of banishment and separation from the beloved, and the elopement to Scotland to marry against the wishes of the family. However, in Lady Mary's case there was no happily-ever-after but rather a growing

disenchantment with her husband, estrangement, and eventual separation. The elements of Lady Mary's life and the fact that her fate hung on the issue of property, which was so important in the marital arrangements of the landed gentry and the aristocracy, trickled down to the middle and lower classes through popular culture, particularly novels. Jane Austen, whose life spanned the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, used the issue of property and the contemporary marriage market among the landed gentry to explore the dilemma of women without property and the relations between men and women. In *Sense and Sensibility,* published in 1818, and in *Pride and Prejudice,* published in 1813, the female protagonists had very dim marriage prospects because their families had no property with which to entice suitors. This was so even though in both novels the families counted themselves among the landed gentry. In *Pride and Prejudice,* the property of the Bennet family was entailed to a male heir and the Bennets had only daughters.[24] The male heir was the parson, Mr. Collins, whose inheritance of the estate upon Mr. Bennet's eventual death would leave the Bennet daughters and his widow without an income or a home. Mr. Collins, in need of a wife and believing that his role as putative heir enhanced his suitability as a husband, proposed marriage to the eldest Bennet daughter, Elizabeth. From Mr. Collins's perspective, the marriage would prevent the females of the family from falling into financial ruin in the event of Mr. Bennet's death. In an act that was almost unthinkable in the context of the times and for a young woman of apparently no prospects, Elizabeth refused the offer, much to the consternation of her mother. While it is easy to read Mrs. Bennet as a figure of fun for her apparently single-minded concentration on arranging marriages for her daughters, it is also sobering to consider the possible fate of a widowed Mrs. Bennet and her daughters without an income or a home.

In her later novel *Sense and Sensibility,* Austen wrote for the women of the Dashwood family the fate she spared the Bennet women: They were banished from their home by the male heir and left with an inadequate income and no property to settle on the daughters after the death of their father.[25] Austen begins *Sense and Sensibility* with the death of Mr. Henry Dashwood, causing his widow and daughters to lose the entailed family estate, Norland Park, to John, Mr. Dashwood's son by a previous wife.

The Dashwood daughters were left with 500 pounds each, and they and their mother were displaced at Norland by John and his cold and imperious wife, Fanny. In both novels, the families were rescued eventually by wealthy men who married the elder daughters, thus ensuring both a home and dowries for the younger daughters. But, what if there were no marriageable men on the horizon; what would be the likely fate of a woman without means or family or both? In *Jane Eyre,* another nineteenth-century author, Charlotte Brontë, allows us to imagine the life of a penniless young orphan, the Jane of the novel's title, left in the care of her cruel aunt, Mrs. Reed.[26] Eventually Jane took up teaching, one of the few professions that respectable middle-class women could practice, although it did not provide either an adequate income or security. For middle-class women, marriage was the way to achieve both personal and financial security. In the case of the fictional Jane, she became the governess to the niece of the formidable Mr. Rochester, with whom she fell in love and whom she eventually married. Ironically, Jane discovered at the end of the novel, before her marriage to Rochester, that she was a wealthy woman, having inherited 20,000 pounds from her uncle. Although ten years after her marriage to Rochester, Jane stated that she and her husband enjoyed perfect equality, that equality could not have extended to property since, as we have seen, women lost control and even ownership of their property under common law.

The most independent woman in an Austen novel is Emma Woodhouse in the eponymous *Emma,* who is famously described in the first line of the novel as "handsome, clever and rich."[27] For much of the novel, Emma, who had a personal fortune of 30,000 pounds, stated her desire never to marry. When her impecunious friend Harriett lamented that Emma would end up an old maid, Emma replied, "I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public! A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid . . . but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else."[28]

In their novels, Austen and Brontë used literature to analyze the political economy of early-nineteenth-century marriage among the elites when married women had no property rights, entail was common, and large estates were consolidated through marriage. However, the fate of

unmarried women with no or little income could be worse, as Emma realized. Marriage conferred on women social status as well as financial support. It was not until the passage of the Married Women's Property Bills in 1870 and 1882 that married women in Britain gained legal rights to their own property. In the United States, with a legal system influenced by common law, most states passed a series of acts between 1839 and the 1880s recognizing the right of married women to own and control their own property. Eventually, the legal definition of property was widened to include earnings from wages and business.[29]

Women, Property, and Islamic Law

It is ironic that harem women were perceived in the West as the epitome of female oppression, particularly sexual oppression, in contrast to their own women who, Westerners contended, lived in an advanced society that provided protection and security for females. In fact, as a comparison of English common law and Islamic law demonstrates, the degree to which elite Englishwomen were dependent on their male relatives because of their lack of property rights was foreign to Islamic society, where women of all classes had the legal capacity to own property and were considered legal persons by the courts. There is nothing in Islamic law that is comparable to the notion in English common law that a woman's legal personhood and identity are conflated into her husband's after marriage. Islam accords to women legal standing not only through property rights but above all through a woman's right to execute a contract. Indeed, property rights are contingent on the right to make contracts. Among Muslims and under Islamic law, marriage is a contract to which a woman who has reached her legal majority must give her consent either orally or in writing.[30]

Islamic law does not make a distinction between a *feme covert* and a *feme sole*. Only minors, both boys and girls, had legal guardians, or *wali*s, usually the father or grandfather of the child. However, the guardian's authority to act for his son or daughter ended when the child reached his or her majority. Judith Tucker, in her study of two eighteenth-century jurists, pointed out that Hanafi judges agreed that a woman in her legal majority

had the right to arrange her own marriage contract or to hire an agent to arrange a marriage for her.[31] According to Tucker, "Once a child has reached his or her legal majority (at the time of puberty), that child's right to choose a marriage partner took clear precedence over the family's right to arrange a marriage. The *mufti*s all agreed on the basic principle that men and women in their legal majority could choose their own mates."[32] A woman could also protect herself after marriage by adding conditions to her marriage contract such as prohibiting her husband from taking a second wife or allowing her a divorce if he did so. For example, the marriage contract of Umm al-Hana, who came from a wealthy and prominent merchant family, prohibited her husband from remarrying or taking another concubine. About his two other wives and his concubine, Umm al-Hana stipulated that his other wives should never live with her in one house, nor should they ever move to a house close to hers.[33]

Women's right to property in Islamic law is derived from a verse in the Qur'an, which Muslims believe is the word of God as revealed to the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century. The Qur'an also became one of the sources of Islamic law. The particular revelation relating to women's property ownership is found in *sura* (chapter) IV, aya (verse) VII:

> From what is left by parents
> And those nearest related
> There is a share for men
> And a share for women,
> Whether the property be small
> Or large—a determinate share.[34]

Under the law, a woman has the right to own and manage her own property, to will it to her heirs after her death, and to endow it as *waqf*. The only legal restriction on women's property ownership is the same as that on men's, namely, that the property of the deceased is subject to division according to the law. The Qur'an stipulates the relatives who have an interest in the property of the deceased and the size of the share each should receive. Female children are entitled to half the share of their brothers. The Qur'an says,

God (thus) directs you
As regards your children's
(Inheritance): to the male,
A portion equal to that
Of two females . . . [35]

Both men and women can evade the division of property stipulated by the Qur'an by making a will, which allows the testator to divide the property as s/he pleases. However, only a third of the testator's estate can be willed and thus is not subject to Islamic inheritance law. English practices such as entail and primogeniture, which privileged the eldest males in a family, would be illegal under Islamic law, which produced a fragmentation, rather than a consolidation, of property and thus of wealth through the laws governing inheritance. The law was also supposed to ensure that women received their fair share so that in theory Muslim women would not suffer the same fate as the heroines of the Austen novels mentioned previously.

Additionally, the dowry *(mahr)* is paid directly to the woman, not to her family or to her husband, and she maintains control of it after her marriage. The Qur'an makes this explicit by saying, "And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift."[36] A woman retains possession of her property after her marriage, and neither spouse has a legal claim to or interest in the property of the other because of the marriage. The woman does not have the legal responsibility or obligation to use her personal wealth or property to support her husband or family. Maintenance, providing food, clothing, and lodging, is the primary responsibility of the husband. In return, a woman gives her husband faithfulness and obedience. According to the Qur'an,

Men are the protectors
And maintainers of women,
Because God has given to one more (strength)
Than the other, and because
They support them
From their means.
Therefore the righteous women
Are devoutly obedient . . . [37]

Thus Islam, while expanding the legal and property rights of women, did not overturn the patriarchal order set in place by the emergence of Islam in seventh-century Arabia. It did, however, restructure the gender system and give women some autonomy within a patriarchal legal system and family structure by expanding the rights accorded to women.

Women as Property Owners

There is ample evidence in court documents and archives that women exercised their property rights in all historical epochs. Women bought and sold property, were heirs to the property of deceased relatives, acted as moneylenders, ran businesses, and made religious endowments known as *waqf*s (pl. *awqaf*).

The *waqf* as a way of protecting and passing down property seems ideally suited to the Mamluk system of Ottoman Egypt and to the economic needs of women. Briefly, a *waqf* is the alienation of income-producing property in perpetuity to benefit, although not always immediately, a religious or pious cause. According to Islamic tradition, the institution of *waqf* can be traced to Abraham, who spent his wealth in acts of charity including the construction of the foremost altar in Arabia, the Ka'ba at Mecca. However, the view most commonly held by Muslims is that *waqf* was unknown in pre-Islamic times but was instituted through the authorization of the Prophet Muhammad.[38]

The formulation of the legal doctrines related to *waqf* was done by the jurist Abu Yusuf (d. 798). He established the fundamental doctrine that a *waqf* was only valid if it were irrevocable and made in perpetuity. He also established the legal precedent that allowed the establishment of the *ahli,* or family *waqf,* in addition to the *waqf khayri,* or pious *waqf.* The difference between the two is that the pious *waqf* immediately benefits religious institutions or pious causes such as providing bread to the poor, while a family *waqf* allows the donor to benefit from the income of the *waqf* during her lifetime and her heirs after her death. It is not until there are no more heirs of the donor to claim an income from the *waqf* that the revenues generated by the *waqf* property revert to the religious or pious causes stipulated by the donor. The family *waqf* also allows the donor to

name herself the administrator *(nazira)* of her *waqf,* giving her control of the endowment.

Although women's right to own property is guaranteed by Islamic law, the alienation of property in *waqf* gives additional legal sanction and protection to women's property ownership and control. This is because the *waqf* is regulated by Islamic law and comes under the authority of the Islamic court.[39] The court required that the donor be a free person of sound mind who had reached her/his majority and was free of debt. Randi Deguilhem has made the point that the law regarding *waqf*s and the conditions that donors had to meet were gender blind.[40] This characteristic of the law facilitated the exercise of property rights by women and extended to the appointment of *waqf* administrators, making it possible for women donors to appoint women as managers *(nazira*s) of their *waqf*s.

Alienating property in a *waqf* has obvious short-term and long-term benefits for both women and men. The donor of a *waqf* can alienate her entire estate and is not limited to one-third, the maximum allowed for legacies or testamentary gifts. This allows the donor to designate heirs to the income of the *waqf* after her death without regard to Islamic law, which stipulates how the estate of a deceased Muslim should be divided and apportions a greater share to males. In addition, property endowed as *waqf* is not subject to taxation.

The pattern that emerges from a reading of the *waqfiyyat* (endowment deeds) of women in the eighteenth century is that most women founded family *waqf*s and in their *waqf*s named themselves the beneficiaries of the income from the *waqf* during their lifetime and also designated themselves as the administrator of their own *waqf*s. Thus, it appears that women were using the *waqf* system as a court-sanctioned trust fund from which they derived an income and over which they exerted control.

By endowing their property as a *waqf,* women were able not only to safeguard their property from predatory relatives but also to benefit from the income produced by the *waqf* during their lifetime, to ensure their right to manage their property, and to pass it on to their designated heirs.[41] But women were also members of their society and were making *waqf*s for reasons linked not only to their gender but also to their class and in response to the social and economic conditions of the time. Like men, they undoubtedly

saw the institution of the *waqf* as a way to protect and pass on property during a particularly tumultuous period in Egyptian history.[42]

Women and *Waqf*

The records of the Ministry of Awqaf show a total of 3,316 entries related to *waqf* cases during the entire Ottoman period.[43] The ministry's index records the various transactions associated with the *waqf*s, including additions, deletions, and changes, as well as the establishment of new *waqf*s. However, the ministry's index records only those *waqfiyyat* housed in its archives. Other *waqfiyyat* as well as records of the various transactions involved in the establishment of a *waqf* can be found in other collections including the National Archives, the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya.

The ministry's index for the eighteenth century lists 522 donors of *waqf*s. Of those, male donors created 358 *waqf*s as individuals. Multiple male donors included 6 men creating three separate *waqf*s including 2 pairs of brothers and 2 unrelated men. The total for men endowing *waqf*s as individuals or with other men was 364.

Table 1
Men Donors of *Waqf*s, 1700–1800

Men as Individuals	358
Men with Other Men	6
Brothers	4
Unrelated men	2
Men with Men and Women	32
Men with wives	14
Husband, wife, and brother-in-law	2
Guardian and woman	1
Son and his mother	1
Male and female freed slaves	13
Male freed slave with two female freed slaves	1
Total	396

The total number of individual female donors was 97; multiple female donors included 7 women making three *waqf*s with other women for a total of 104. The women's *waqf*s with multiple female donors included one made by two sisters, a second by a woman and her two nieces, and a third by a woman and her mother.

In addition to *waqf*s made by men alone or with other men and women alone or with other women, eighteenth-century men and women made endowments together as groups of kin and fictive kin, that is, as freed slaves. These groups included husbands and wives, a woman with her husband and brother, a woman and her guardian, a woman and her son, and two groups of male and female freed slaves. In one of these groups, the women were freed slaves of the same master, and in the second all the men were members of the 'Azaban regiment and the two women were freed slaves of Ibrahim Katkhuda 'Azaban. In all, there were 22 women and 32 men who created six *waqf*s with multiple donors of men and women (see tables 1 and 2). Thus the total of men and women creating *waqf*s in the eighteenth century as individuals or as parts of a group was 522, including 396 men and 126 women.

The number of donors is the basis for analysis rather than the total number of *waqf*s because this allows us to determine the total number of individual women donors and the percentage of women as donors in comparison to men during the same time period. Also, some women and men made multiple endowments each of which is recorded with a separate

Table 2
Women Donors of *Waqf*s, 1700–1800

Women Individually	97
Women with Other Women	7
Two sisters, aunt and two nieces, mother and daughter	
Women with Men and Women	22
Total	126

number in the index. For example, al-Sitt Zaynab Khatun Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, freed slave of the deceased amir Isma'il Bey al-Kabir al-Qazdughli, owned extensive property including three *wakala*s as well as property including shops in the elite neighborhood of al-Dawudiyya that she endowed over a period of about thirty years. The endowments are listed in the index under four separate numbers.[44]

Based on the total number of endowments founded by individuals, women donors were 24.1 percent of the total number of donors whose *waqfiyyat* can be found in the archives *(daftarkhana)* of the ministry. That women founded 24.1 percent of these *waqf*s is consistent with results obtained by other researchers for both the Arab provinces and Anatolia during the Ottoman period showing women donors from 20 to almost 37 percent of total donors. For example, Haim Gerber's analysis of *waqf* records from fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Edirne shows that women made 20 percent of the new *waqf*s.[45] Gabriel Baer's analysis of the Istanbul register *(tahrir)* of 1546 shows that women made 36.8 percent of the new *waqf*s.[46] Baer also cites evidence from eighteenth-century Aleppo that shows women made 36.3 percent of the *waqf*s, while in Jerusalem between 1805 and 1820 the figure is 24 percent, and from Jaffa during the entire Ottoman period the figure is 23.4 percent.[47] Beshara Doumani's study of *waqf* donors in Nablus and Tripoli between 1800 and 1860 revealed that 11.6 percent of the *waqf*s in Nablus and 47 percent in Tripoli were made by women.[48] The majority of *waqf*s endowed by men and women were family *waqf*s, 79 percent of 211 *waqf*s in Tripoli and 96 percent of 138 *waqf*s in Nablus.

In Nablus most women endowed residential property, while in Tripoli most endowed revenue-producing agricultural property. Doumani observed a significant difference between donors in Nablus and in Tripoli related to inheritance stipulations. Endowers in Nablus generally excluded the female line of descent, preferring to transmit property and its revenues within the male line. In Tripoli, on the other hand, transmission strategies were more pluralistic, noncompetitive, and egalitarian. In fact, in the Tripoli *waqf*s, a significant proportion of donors designated women as primary beneficiaries and one-third even required equal shares among males and females. The transmission strategies in Tripoli are comparable to those of eighteenth-century women donors in Egypt, who stipulated equal shares to

their female and male relatives as well as to female and male slaves. Deguil-hem studied the *waqf*s of two Damascus women who made *waqf*s two centuries apart, Nafiza Hanum in 1776, and Hafiza Hanum in 1880.[49] Like the Egyptian women, they named themselves the administrators of their *waqf*s during their lifetimes. Hafiza Hanum had extensive investments in commercial properties in Damascus, including a bread oven and fifteen shops, most of which came to her as an inheritance from her husband.[50]

The kind of property Mamluk women endowed can be broadly described as urban commercial and residential and agricultural. The types of property included various kinds of shops (sing. *hanut*), workshops, warehouses (sing. *hasil*), living units *(tabaqat)* in apartment houses, *wakala*s, and *rab*'s (tenements or apartments often found over *wakala*s) as well as mills, waterwheels, watering troughs, springs, courtyards, gardens, coffeehouses, a public bath *(hammam)*, *makan,* and productive agricultural land. In short, women owned and endowed all manner of income-producing property that provided them with the revenue to support themselves and their endowments.

The most problematical investment from the perspective of the historian is the *makan* because we cannot be sure of the type of property being described by this term. The literal translation of the term is "place, site, spot, location . . ."[51] André Raymond has used the word *makan* to mean domicile or habitation, but that definition seems to be too narrow. Based on evidence from the *waqfiyyat,* the word *makan* appears to embrace a variety of meanings. For example, in the *waqf* of Fatima Khatun, the *makan* she endowed is described in the Arabic text of the index as originally a dye works.[52] Al-Sitt Mahbuba Khatun bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda had in her *waqf* a property described as *makan li-tajhiz al-amwat al-muslimin,* which was a place where the bodies of deceased Muslims were prepared for burial.[53] Thus the word *makan* referred to a location that could have a number of possible uses depending on the needs of the occupant. For example, the spaces on the ground floor of a *wakala* could be shops or artisanal workshops depending on the occupants at any particular time. Although we cannot be certain of the value of a *makan* because of the ambiguous meaning of the term itself, we do know that a woman endowing a *makan* was a woman of some substance since, according to Raymond, a *makan*

was a substantial investment, often representing a quarter of the estate of a middling merchant.[54]

More women endowed all or part of one or more *makan*s—58 out of 104 women—than any other type of property. A majority of women, 60 out of 104 women or 57.6 percent, endowed more than one property. In other words, fewer than half of the women surveyed endowed only a single property such as a *makan,* a unit in a *rab'*, or a shop.

These findings from eighteenth-century Egyptian *waqfiyyat* contradict the pattern Baer detected in his survey of the sixteenth-century Istanbul *tahrir*. Although the pattern that emerges from the two samples is remarkably similar in some respects, they differ in the number of properties endowed. Baer found that the majority of women created small *waqf*s, which he defined as having only one asset.[55] An analysis of the Egyptian *waqf*s shows, on the other hand, that the majority of the women's *waqf*s, 57.6 percent, were either middling or large, having more than one asset, while a minority, 42.4 percent, had only one asset or a share in one asset. Most often, that asset was a *makan;* occasionally, it was a *manzil* or *dar* (a dwelling), and infrequently it was a shop.

The *waqf*s of eighteenth-century elite women also differ substantially from those of the classic Mamluk period studied by Carl F. Petry.[56] Using the roughly 1,000 *waqf* cataloged and analyzed by Amin in his monumental work *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire de 239/853 à 922/1516,* Petry isolated the 283 listed under a woman's name.[57] He found that the great majority were estates managed by a woman as the designated administrator of a husband's or father's *waqf* while the minority were estates endowed by women themselves composed of property they owned independently of men. While noting the genuine authority that women exercised over property, Petry notes that it was over property accumulated by male relatives. Petry argues, "Rather than expecting to find the kind of independent disposition of assets as defined by the norms of modern Western societies, we should seek the autonomy of these women in the context of their partnership with spouses, immediate families, and extended lineages."[58]

The pattern of the eighteenth-century women's *waqf*s housed in the Ministry of Awqaf exhibits a pattern very different from the one discerned

by Petry in the *waqf*s of medieval women. As shown above, the vast majority
of women's *waqf*s from the eighteenth century were established by women
acting as individuals, not in partnership with spouses, male relatives, or
immediate family members to endow property that they had accumulated.
The texts of the *waqfiyyat,* or endowment deeds, clearly show that women
were the owners of the property endowed in the *waqf.* Additionally, the
stipulations that they made ensured their right to manage the *waqf*s they
created and to benefit from the income of the *waqf* during their lifetime
by naming themselves the *nazira* (administrator) of their own *waqf*s and
the beneficiary of the income. Rather than seeing autonomous economic
behavior as a Western phenomenon of the modern period as Petry does, we
should recognize that adult Egyptian women whether married or unmarried
had property rights and exercised them before the modern period, whereas
married British and American women in the modern period did not have
such rights until the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts in
the late nineteenth century. Also, the difference between elite women of
the period of the Mamluk Sultanate and women in the eighteenth century
could be attributed to the changes that took place in the political, economic,
and social life during the transition from independent Mamluk sultanate to
imperial province. In a less stable political environment marked by frequent
internecine fighting among the Mamluks, whose custom was for the victors
to confiscate the property of their defeated rivals, property endowed as
waqf and registered in the court acted as a safeguard for women's property
and the income it produced.

Women and the Eighteenth-Century Economy

In order to evaluate the property ownership of women and to assess their
economic activity, it is necessary to consider them within the context of
the Egyptian economy of the time. Egypt in the eighteenth century was the
hub of a network of long-distance trading routes connecting Asia, Africa,
and Europe. In Egypt's commercial economy, the largest fortunes were still
made in long-distance trade. Although Egypt by the eighteenth century
had lost its paramount position to European competition, the transit trade,
particularly in coffee, remained strong. While local textile production was

under increasing pressure from low-cost European imports, the production and export of Egyptian textiles remained the most important manufacturing activity of the eighteenth century. Thus women who invested their capital in *wakala*s and *khan*s, *rab*'s, warehouses, shops, and workshops of various kinds were behaving like rational economic actors within the context of the economy of the time and the ways available to men and women to invest their capital productively.

Given Egypt's position as an entrepôt in the international transit trade, one of the foundation stones of the country's economy was the *wakala,* which served three purposes: warehouses, retail sales and workshops, and residences. On the ground floor were the warehouses where goods were stored before redistribution inside the country or re-exportation out of Egypt, and shops for retail sales or even artisanal workshops. On the upper floors were the residential units, which were rented to merchants and looked out over the interior courtyard *(hawsh)*. The value of a *wakala* depended on its size and location. As Raymond has noted, the price of a *wakala* could surpass a million *para*s, a sum that exceeded by far the value of any other economic investment in Cairo at this time.[59]

After the *makan* and shops, more women endowed all or part of a *wakala* than any other kind of property except land. Thus women not only

Table 3
Number of Women Endowing All or Part of Various Kinds of Property

Makan	60
Hanut (shop)	27
Agricultural Land	12
Wakala/Khan	11
Workshop	11
Rab' (tenement)	7
Coffeehouse	6
Hasil (warehouse)	4

owned the most lucrative investment property of the period but also, as owners, had to manage an investment of considerable complexity. The various units that made up a *wakala* were rented out to the merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans who used the various spaces in the building. If the owner of the *wakala* also owned the apartments on top, she had to manage these units, which were usually rented to merchants on a monthly basis.

Of the eleven women investing in a *wakala,* five endowed the entire *wakala* while six endowed shares in *wakala*s. Also, five of the women endowed all or part of the *rab'* on top of the *wakala*. For one of the eleven women, the *wakala* was the only property endowed in her *waqf,* and for another woman, her *waqf* consisted entirely of shares in a *wakala*.[60] For the other nine, however, the *wakala* was only one of several other properties they owned and endowed.

By far the largest *waqf*s belonged to women who were former slaves and part of the Mamluk elite. Of the 126 women who endowed *waqf*s in the eighteenth century, 43, or 34.1 percent, were manumitted slaves in Mamluk households. The largest number of *waqf*s were made by freeborn women, 50 in total, but 32 of the 50 were small, which is defined as having one–two assets. The most common asset in small *waqf*s was usually a *makan* or a share of a *makan*. Freeborn Mamluk women, including eleven daughters and one sister, also made *waqf*s, which, while often substantial, were not as large as those of the freed slaves. For example, al-Hajja Fatima Qadin bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, sister of one of the most powerful Mamluks of the eighteenth century, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, made a *waqf* consisting of a sole asset, a *makan* outside of Bab Zuwayla in Darb al-Ahmar.[61] Salha Khatun, daughter of Salim Agha, formerly of the Gawishan military corps, endowed six shops and a storehouse.[62]

The largest *waqf*s were endowed by freed slave women who were identified in their endowment deeds as wives of Mamluks, such as al-Sitt Ammatullah al-Bayda, freed slave and wife of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda, who endowed a *wakala,* a *rab',* and twelve shops in Bulaq as well as land in the province of Buhayra.[63] The only freeborn woman with a *waqf* comparable to or larger than Mamluk women like Ammatullah al-Bayda was al-Hajja Khadija Khatun, daughter of the deceased Muhammad 'Arabughli, whose *waqf* included substantial agricultural land, much of it

planted in date palms, as well as commercial investments in Cairo including a *makan* in the most prestigious eighteenth-century neighborhood of Azbakiyya and land along the lake.[64] For comparative purposes, "large" can be understood in terms of the value of the properties endowed as well as the number of properties in a single *waqf.*

Not all freed slaves had ties to Mamluk households. The index includes nine women who were former slaves of non-Mamluk men and women. For example, Ruqya Khatun Bint ʿAbd Allah al-Bayda was the freed slave probably of an artisan identified as al-Haj Muhammad al-Nahhas, the coppersmith; she endowed a *makan* inside a tenement above the Suq al-Nahhas. We should regard this as a substantial investment since the *suq* was the center of the copper trade and the *makan* could be used either as a workshop for a coppersmith or as a shop or even a residence.

As the above examples show, freeborn women identified themselves as daughters while freed slave women identified themselves in relationship to their former master and then to their husband. The slave women invariably identified themselves as white, *bayda,* or as women of color using the words brown *(samra)* or black *(sawda).* Of the forty-three freed women belonging to Mamluk households, twenty-seven identified themselves in their names as white and two as women of color while fourteen had no identification as to color. The two women were Maryam al-Sawda (the black), freed slave of ʿAli Agha al-Jardali, who endowed a living unit in a tenement at the top of Khan al-Khalili, and al-Hajja Maryam Khatun al-Samra (the brown), the freed slave of a woman, al-Sitt Khadija Khatun Bint ʿAbd Allah al-Bayda, who was herself the freed slave of the amir Mustafa Bey Shahin. Maryam endowed the perpetual usufructs (*khiliw*s) of two *makan*s. Among the non-Mamluk freed women slaves, four were white, three identified themselves as women of color, and two were not identified as to color.

The question is whether these designations of white and black indicate a racialized system of slavery. It is clear from the evidence of the endowment deeds that white women were preferred as concubines and wives. But was this preference based on race or ethnicity? It is conceivable that Mamluk men who entered Egypt as slaves from Georgia or Circassia were expressing a preference for concubines or wives who shared their ethnicity

and that this preference led to the creation of the Mamluk elite as a quasi-caste within Egypt. As members of the Mamluk elite, women slaves from Georgia or Circassia enjoyed higher rank and more privileges, including wealth, than freed slaves of African origin. Thus, whether intended or not, a system of racial privilege developed within the Mamluk slave system.

It is difficult to estimate values of property, and thus the wealth of the donor, from the endowment deeds or the index to the *waqfiyyat*. The *waqfiyyat* do not generally give the price a donor paid for a piece of property, nor do they record the value of the property endowed as a whole. However, one way to understand the relationship between women and the eighteenth-century economy is to compare the investment decisions made by women and those made by the merchants whose estates were analyzed by Raymond. The large merchants had a considerable part of their fortunes invested in commercial real estate including *wakala*s, shops, and dwellings and more rarely in artisanal workshops.

For example, a silk broker left an estate estimated in 1791 at 347,209 *para*s, which included among other things six *makan*s, two shops, a court-yard, two reception rooms *(qa'a),* and a *maq'ad,* a covered porch or balcony that served as an outdoor reception room, usually on the men's side of the house.[65] In the estates of the wealthiest of the merchants, who dealt mostly in coffee and spices, these investments in urban commercial real estate were very important. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Tunisi, a coffee merchant, left an estate valued in 1727 at 222,335 *para*s of which 138,604 *para*s represented commercial real estate including six *makan*s, one shop, and two warehouses (see table 4).[66] The local money of the period was the silver *para (nisf fidda).* During the economic crisis between 1670 and 1740, the *nisf fidda diwani* appeared in an attempt to stabilize the currency.

Table 4
Average Estates of Artisans and Merchants in Constant *Para*s

Artisans	29,664
Merchants (excluding the *tujjar*)	68,316
Merchants (including the *tujjar*)	133,752

We can compare the merchants' estates to the *waqf*s of women in terms of assets and investment decisions and to estimate roughly the value of certain properties. In 1758, for example, 'A'isha Hanim, daughter of the amir Ridwan Agha, endowed all of a *wakala* in Bulaq in addition to waterwheels, a baking oven *(furn)*, a mill *(tahun)*, and an unspecified number of *makan*s.[67] Another example is Zaynab Khatun, freed slave of the deceased amir Isma'il Bey, who endowed considerable property including three *wakala*s, a courtyard *(hawsh),* a workshop for the making and selling of bread, a one-quarter share in a shop, a coffeehouse, four *makan*s, and two shops.[68] It should be noted that the *makan*s she owned were in two of the most prestigious neighborhoods in Cairo, one on the east bank of Elephant Lake (Birkat al-Fil), inhabited only by beys, and the other west of the city's main canal, which was a residential district for Mamluks of middle rank. The *waqf*s of non-Mamluk women exhibit the same pattern of investment. For example, al-Sharifa 'A'isha Khatun Bint al-Sayyid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-'Aqad endowed a *makan* and two shops in Khatt Qantara Aqsunqur, a share in a public bath *(hammam),* two *makan*s and three shops below them near Darb al-Gamamiz, and a shop in Khatt Suwayqa al-Saba'in (see table 4).

Comparing Women's and Men's *Waqf*s

The *waqf*s of male merchants and Mamluk women are similar in content to those of Mamluk men such as Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Sinnari, the former slave of Murad Bey, one of the last Mamluks to dominate Egypt before the 1798 invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte. The house of Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Sinnari, which he endowed in his *waqf,* became the first home of the French Institute in Cairo.[69] Like other men whose *waqf*s will be discussed below, he created a family *(ahli) waqf* and named himself the administrator *(nazir)* of his endowment as well as its beneficiary during his lifetime.

Isma'il Katkhuda 'Azaban, who identified himself as a *tabi',* or client, of the deceased Ibrahim Katkhuda Mustahfizan al-Qazdughli, created an endowment consisting of several valuable properties including a house *(manzil)* in Dawudiyya near Qawsun, an elite neighborhood where many high-ranking Mamluks lived, and empty land adjacent to it where he built two houses costing 25,000 *nisf fedda* for one and 11,454 for the other.[70]

The complex of houses included eight shops and land planted in a variety of fruit trees including date palms, apricots, pomegranates, and lemons. Like other Mamluk men and women, Isma'il made an *ahli* (family) *waqf* and named himself the beneficiary during his lifetime and also the administrator of the endowment.

The amir 'Ali Katkhuda Mustahfizan, freed slave of Salih Galabi, created a large *waqf* composed of land and buildings in the countryside including Qalubiyya, Mansura, and Giza; *wakala*s in Suwayqat al-Izza, a commercial neighborhood between Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel, and in Qawsun and Rumayla, where he also owned a *sabil-kuttab* (combined public fountain with a Qur'anic school above), three shops, a bakery, and a mill. 'Ali Katkhuda enlarged his *waqf* with several additions, each given a separate number.[71] One provides insights into how property was acquired and how much it was worth. In the additions numbered 2426 and 2427, 'Ali Katkhuda bought a *makan* in the Suwayqat al-'Izza/Suq al-Silah neighborhood from Gulsan Khatun, daughter of the deceased amir 'Ali Gurbagi, formerly of the Gamaliyan regiment, and added it to his *waqf*.[72] Gulsan and her sister came into possession of the property through the will of their mother, Khalima Khatun, daughter of the deceased 'Ali Affandi, who was secretary *(katib)* of the Gamiliyan. After her sister's death, Gulsan's half of the *makan* passed to her sister's husband, the amir Khalil Gurbagi, also of the Gamiliyan. Upon his death, the property reverted back to Gulsan, who sold it to 'Ali Katkhuda for 300 gold dinars. This transaction shows the court's interest in proving ownership of property destined for a *waqf* since Gulsan had to show the provenance of the *makan* and, according to the endowment deed, she appeared personally in court. It also demonstrates that inheritance was one of the ways that women in well-to-do families came into possession of property. This relatively simple purchase of one property also shows the strength of the ties between members of the same household, the importance of marriage and kinship in creating cohesion and continuity between members, and the way property circulated among them. All of the male principals, including the father of Gulsan and the husband of her sister, were members of the same military corps, the Gamaliyan. Another similar transaction was the purchase of a dwelling with stables and a courtyard from Mahmoud Gawish of the Gamaliyan.[73] The properties were purchased for

'Ali Katkhuda by Ahmad Gawish, also of the Gamiliyan, acting as the agent of 'Ali Katkhuda. The purchase price was 445 riyals.

'Ali Katkhuda made two stipulations in his endowment deed that show both his deference to his patron and his concern for the continuity of his household *(bayt),* the Mustahfizan. Upon the death of all the beneficiaries of his *waqf,* 'Ali Katkhuda stipulated that it should become part of the *waqf* of his former master, Salih Jalibi. Both 'Ali Katkhuda and his wife, Hanifa Qadin Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, were freed slaves of Salih Galibi. Upon the merger of the two *waqf*s, 'Ali Katkhuda wanted half of the income of his *waqf* to be used to buy slaves and weapons for the Mustahfizan and the Gawishan, with the money divided equally between the two corps. The *waqf* was dated 1178/1764.

The *waqf*s of men share certain similarities with women's endowments, namely, the mix of properties endowed; the creation of family *(ahli)* rather than pious *(khayri) waqf*s, which allowed them to receive the income during their lifetime; and finally, the stipulation that the donor act as the administrator of the endowment during his lifetime. However, there is a significant difference, which is the use of the endowments to strengthen the household *(bayt)* to which he belonged. We have already seen how the eventual heirs to half of the income from 'Ali Katkhuda's *waqf* were to be the Mustahfizan and Gawishan. But all three of the men whose endowments have been analyzed here also made stipulations that do not appear in the endowments of women in this study. All three men, possibly to ensure the cohesion of their respective households, stipulated that any of their freed slaves *('utqa')* who married outsiders *(ajanib)* would be penalized by the disinheriting of their children. In Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Sinnari's *waqf,* the stipulation is *"idha tazawwaj ahad min al-'utqa' bi-ajnabi harij 'an al-'utiqa' wa la dakhl,"* which means "if any of the freed slaves marry a stranger from outside the [group of] freed slaves and not from inside." Isma'il Katkhuda makes it clear that the prohibition against marrying outside the household extends to both men and women by stating that *"kul rajul min 'utaqa' al-waqif al-mushahhar ilayhi tazawwaj bi-ajnabiyya . . . wa kul imra'a min al-waqif . . . ilayhi tazawwaj bi-rajul ajnabi,"* which means "any man among the freed slaves of the renowned donor who marries a foreign woman . . . and any woman from among the freed women slaves who marries a foreign man."

Women donors who made family *waqf*s generally named as heirs to the income after their deaths their children, husbands, brothers and sisters, or other relatives as well as their slaves. Most often the stipulation was that children, male and female, would receive equal shares and slaves, male and female, black and white, would also share equally. The *waqf*s of Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Sinnari and Isma'il Katkhuda depart from this pattern with the stipulation concerning marriage outside the group. However, the *waqf* of 'Ali Katkhuda had two stipulations that penalized black female slaves particularly. Only black women slaves and their children would be disinherited for marrying outside the household, and they inherited only half of what the white male and female slaves and the black male slaves inherited. These stipulations are unique among the eighteenth-century endowments read for this study, and the motivation behind them and their objective are unclear. In other *waqf* documents, the donors, both men and women, stipulate that for the purposes of inheritance no distinction should be made between male and female slaves or white and black slaves.

It is possible that the stipulations concerning the marriage of freed slaves male or female were meant to keep income and property within the household and to perpetuate the master-client relationship that was supposed to endure even after a slave was manumitted. Since the Mamluk system like the wider society was both patriarchal and patrilocal, a freed female slave who married outside the master's household would take both her property and any children she might have to her husband's household, thereby breaking the bonds between herself, her children, and her former master. In the case of 'Ali Katkhuda's *waqf,* the stipulation that black women slaves would be disinherited for marrying outside the household may reflect the racialized hierarchy in the Mamluk system that reserved marriage for former white slaves from the Caucasus. Thus black slaves and their children would become clients rather than kin of their masters, making the threat of disinheritance a powerful incentive for marrying within the household's pool of former slaves.

What men's and women's *waqf*s have in common is that they invested in Cairo's commercial economy by purchasing the various building blocks of the city's urban commercial economy: part or all of *wakala*s, storerooms,

shops, and workshops; and dwellings, such as entire tenements or units within them or freestanding houses; and even waterwheels, courtyards, outdoor reception areas (*maq‘ad*s), and other properties that would yield an income to the investor. The endowments of men and women, merchants, Mamluks, and ordinary people reveal a thriving commercial economy centered in the old city built during the Fatimid period, surrounded by walls and known as Misr. This area through the eighteenth century remained the center of intense commercial activity revolving around long-distance trade, manufacturing conducted by artisans in small workshops, and the services needed to support not just Misr but the wider city.

As the examples from various *waqf*s show, women were investing in the same mix of urban commercial real estate as merchants and male Mamluks. This pattern means that the women buying, selling, and endowing property were making certain decisions: First, to invest their capital, second, to invest it in certain income-producing properties, and third, to protect it by endowing it as a *waqf*. These decisions show that women understood the economy of the time and through their investments and endowments were active participants in it.

Conclusion

As Lady Mary understood intuitively, property rights confer on women autonomy and power inside and outside the family and household. The women Lady Mary encountered in Istanbul who were of her rank and status or even higher were unlikely to suffer the same fate as the titled Englishwoman or the women in the novels of Austen and Brontë. They were not destined to share the fate of Lady Mary, who came to her marriage without a dowry or money of her own, or the fate of the Bennet sisters, who had no prospect of inheriting property or money from their father since his estate was entailed to a distant male relative. Islamic law is clear that a dowry should be paid directly to the woman and that in matters of inheritance both females and males inherit, although a man's share is twice the share of a woman. An adult woman can handle her own property and does not need a guardian to buy and sell, own a business, sign contracts, make a will, or endow a *waqf*.

The religious endowment documents in the Ministry of Awqaf demonstrate women's autonomy in matters of property. Whether the endowment was made by a woman or a man, the person endowing the *waqf* had to demonstrate to the court that s/he was indeed the legal owner of the property to be endowed and, in the case of a pious endowment, that the income from the property could support the institutions or causes stipulated in the endowment. Although the endowment deeds in the Ministry of Awqaf do not include the monetary value of the properties endowed, it is possible to arrive at some estimation of the worth of the endowments. This estimate was accomplished by comparing the properties endowed by Mamluk women to the estates of merchants studied by Raymond. The comparison shows that women were investing in the same mix of urban commercial real estate as the male merchants including the most expensive of all acquisitions: the *wakala* with its mix of workshops, warehouses, shops, and living quarters. Thus women were showing the same kind of business acumen as the merchants by investing in income-producing urban commercial and residential properties at a time when Egypt and Cairo were still an important center of commercial activity.

Women tended to make family *(ahli) waqf*s rather than pious *khayri waqf*s or a mixture of the two because the family endowment paid an income to donors immediately. Women making this kind of endowment also tended to name themselves as the beneficiary of the income during their lifetime as well as the administrator *(nazira)* of the endowment. From this evidence, it appears that Mamluk women were using the *waqf* system to create a court-sanctioned and approved income-producing fund that could provide them with a stream of income and protect them from the vicissitudes of life during the turbulent Mamluk era. This is because *waqf*s were under the jurisdiction of the court and could not be easily dismantled or fragmented, although donors and heirs used various legal devices to add or drop or transfer property from and between *waqf*s. Financial autonomy and the ability of women in some cases to amass large estates of income-producing property enhanced the position of Mamluk women within their households.

6

The City as Text

Space, Gender, and Power in Cairo

The lives of female and male Mamluks were bound up with the successes and defeats of the households they entered usually as slaves. Although their intrinsic abilities no doubt allowed them to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them, ultimately their fortunes were linked to those of their household *(bayt)*, its head, their patron, and, for men, the career path they followed within the *bayt*. How well or badly they did within the Mamluk system was reflected in their rank and status and the titles they carried as part of their name. The words *qadin* or *khatun* after a woman's name meant she was a woman of rank with status in the household as a concubine or wife of the master and with access to wealth that she could use to create a large estate of income-producing property.

Just as her name tells us about her place within the household and the Mamluk hierarchy, so too does her residence. In the eighteenth century, the woman who lived in the great house known as the Bayt al-Razzaz outside of Bab Zuwayla, a very crowded and commercialized district in the Tabbana quarter of the city, was lower in the Mamluk hierarchy than a woman who lived on the western shore of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya, the small lake or pond that filled each year with the inundation of the Nile. The location of their houses represented the social and economic gulf between the unnamed woman living in the house known as the Bayt al-Razzaz between Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel and al-Sitt Nafisa al-Bayda, the wife of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and the wife of Murad Bey, whose house on the western shore of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya was in the city's most elite neighborhood.

That the wife of a *katkhuda* (officer) would live in the Bayt al-Razzaz and the wife of the head of the Qazdughli *bayt* would live on the western shore of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya was not a random event. The movement of Mamluks out of the old Fatimid city to the southern zone outside the walls between the Bab Zuwayla gate and the Citadel and then farther and farther to the west occurred in tandem with the shift in power from the Ottoman governor at the Citadel to the Mamluk *bayt*s. The weakening of Ottoman authority in Egypt allowed the resurgent Mamluks to move their households farther away from the Citadel and an increasingly impotent pasha. As power shifted, the size of the amirs' retinues increased, resulting in the need for larger and larger houses, which was made possible by their increasing control of the revenues of the country. Areas west of the old city provided the space needed for mansions the size of Muhammad Bey al-Alfi's, which explains in part the movement of powerful amirs first to the Birkat al-Fil and then farther west to the Birkat al-Azbakiyya. According to André Raymond,

> A *grand seigneur* of Cairo was able to support a *bayt* of 150–200 persons. Thus, he needed considerable revenues to support his personnel and a residence large enough for the *mamluk*s and followers to assemble there, the residence playing in case of internal trouble the role of fortress where all the party could assemble. The imposing dimensions of the residence not only had a sumptuous style, they constituted the ostensible manifestation of the power of the proprietor, which explains the importance of certain of the residences.[1]

In the eighteenth century, the most powerful amirs and the wealthiest merchants lived in the neighborhood of Azbakiyya lying west of Cairo between the city and the bustling port of Bulaq. As the beys and merchants left the crowded urban center behind in favor of the space and tranquility of Azbakiyya, only the narrowest segment of the amir-merchant elite were able to build their mansions on the banks of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya. Such was the reputed beauty of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya that European travelers like Claude Etienne Savary wrote ecstatically about the richly adorned boats skimming across the lake and the light from hundreds of lamps and lanterns that rivaled the brightness of the night sky.

Al-Jabarti in his chronicle quoted a long speech about Azbakiyya that
said in part,

> Azbakiyya was full of joys and jolly company,
> Water and sky floating together and flowers enveloped by heaven,
> Surrounded by splendid houses as the halo of the moon.
> In the green brocade of its fields the doves are cooing,
> The breeze refreshed by its flowing waters catching the light sparkling
>   through the trees;
> Glittering as silvery armor with roses marking the red of wounds.[2]

In 1798, when French forces invaded Egypt, Napoleon Bonaparte
chose as his residence the great palace of Muhammad Bey al-Alfi in Azba-
kiyya on the western shore of the *birka*. The headquarters of the French
army was established north of Bonaparte's residence. Militarily the deci-
sion made sense since it gave the French control of the broad plain between
the outskirts of Cairo and the Nile port of Bulaq. On the symbolic level, the
French presence in Azbakiyya was a sign of French power and domination
because they were now established in what had been the Mamluk seat of
power, Cairo, and in the very neighborhood and mansions that expressed
that power architecturally. In the eighteenth century, Azbakiyya was the
preferred residential neighborhood of the members of the Qazdughli *bayt*
and its most powerful amirs, such as 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and his successors,
and their concubines and wives.

When the French invaded Egypt, the Mamluks under Murad Bey
retreated to Upper Egypt where they carried out their resistance to the
French occupation. Although the French occupation lasted only three
years, the Mamluks never recovered their hold on power. The French inva-
sion paved the way for the accession to power of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha,
whose centralization of authority in his hands doomed to extinction the
Mamluks as a ruling elite and Azbakiyya to destruction as a symbol of
their power.

As the urban landscape of eighteenth-century Cairo demonstrates,
urban meanings are encoded in the built form and are legible in the way
urban space is used and allocated. Irene Bierman has pointed out in her

study of the Ottomanization of Crete that Ottoman hegemony was not only expressed in the construction and transformation of buildings themselves, such as the construction of a mosque complex, but also in the location of those buildings in the city.[3] Such was also the case for the city of Cairo, whose modern form took shape from the period of the Bahri Mamluks through the Circassian dynasty of the medieval period and was left relatively unchanged by the Ottoman conquest of 1517.[4]

The built form, whether the city as a whole or its individual parts, expresses the connection between space and power. Decoding these forms for meaning on the basis of the behavior of its residents or as a system of signs to be decoded demands an understanding of the culture, which is the key to interpreting behavior or decoding the sign system. The eighteenth-century city and the house enclosed behavior that can be interpreted and understood, even by historians, through texts rather than ethnographically through observation. Historians are fortunate to have a plethora of texts related to the city of Cairo and to its buildings, including the chronicles of al-Jabarti and al-Damurdashi; numerous religious endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)* with their precise descriptions of endowed buildings—commercial, residential, and religious; the monumental *Description de l'Egypte,* compiled by the savants who accompanied Bonaparte to Egypt, which contains written descriptions of the great Mamluk houses as well as engravings; and finally, the few houses that are still standing, such as the Bayt al-Razzaz. Understanding how the Mamluks inhabited the city and how Mamluk aesthetics and power relations shaped the city's neighborhoods and domestic architecture deepens our knowledge of the elite as a whole and of the lives of the Mamluk men and women who inhabited the city and lived in its palaces. As Donald Preziosi has written, "Cities and their parts exemplify, embody and express power relations, to be sure, but at the same time, they enforce, perpetuate, and engender relations of power. At the same time that we inhabit a city, it inhabits us."[5]

The Evolution of the City

Pierre Bourdieu has contended that the use of space maintains and reproduces power and hierarchy, arguing that "the use of space is especially

important in setting up divisions and hierarchies between persons which continually reinforce underlying principles of a culture."[6] Although Bourdieu's interest was in the allocation of household space and how daily household rituals create and maintain hierarchies and power, his insistence on the link between space and power is also applicable to the broader arena of the city. This is particularly the case in eighteenth-century Cairo, where residential neighborhoods—the allocation of residential space—reflected the power and hierarchy of the Mamluk system itself.

The core of the eighteenth-century city and indeed of modern Cairo was the tenth-century imperial capital of the Fatimids, al-Qahira (the Victorious), built on a site selected by the general Jawhar for the fourth caliph Mu'izz al-Din.[7] The city was dominated by the eastern and western palaces facing each other across the imposing boulevard known as Bayn al-Qasrayn, which later under the Mamluks became the site of the mosque and mausoleum complex of Sultan Qalawun and his son, al-Nasir Muhammad, and of Qalawun's hospital *(maristan)*. In 1175 the conqueror Salah al-Din, who vanquished the Crusaders in Jerusalem and overthrew the enfeebled Fatimid dynasty in Cairo, began construction of the Citadel as a fortress and a residence for himself. During the classical Mamluk period, the Citadel became the residence and administrative center of the sultans and, after the Ottoman conquest of 1517, the residence of the governor and headquarters of the Ottoman military corps. The Ottoman conquest of the city notwithstanding, Cairo remained an expression of Mamluk aesthetics in both public buildings and domestic architecture that remained largely unchanged until the nineteenth century.

The city that the resurgent Mamluks inhabited and dominated from the late seventeenth century until the French invasion was largely the creation of Sultan Qalawun and in particular his son and second successor, al-Nasir Muhammad, who reigned with two interruptions from 1293 to 1341, the longest reign of any Mamluk sultan. Because the Bahri Mamluks accepted the principle of familial succession, the formative period of Mamluk rule was dominated by these two men. As a result, as Janet Abu-Lughod has noted, during the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, "the relative tranquility and peace permitted a true flowering of Mamluk culture and a major expansion of the Mamluk capital, Cairo."[8]

Not incidental but rather integral to the story of the Mamluks is that their seat of power was in the city, not in the countryside. Although the classical Mamluk system of the medieval period has been described as feudal or "quasi-feudal," the Mamluks of the period of the sultanate and of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were an urban rather than a rural elite.[9] The city was not, as in feudal Europe, an escape from feudal authority but rather the foundation and expression of Mamluk hegemony, a center of trade and of social and cultural life. Mamluk rulers left their mark on the city through monumental building programs, public works, and a system of municipal government.

During al-Nasir's reign, Cairo's commercial zone, the Qasabah, had 12,000 shops. By the end of his rule, the northern and southern districts, outside of the Fatimid city walls, were heavily populated; the western district had been transformed entirely, and a new City of the Dead had begun to form in the eastern section. Development outside the southern wall was systematic and vigorous from Bab Zuwayla to the Citadel. The western section, eventually the site of Azbakiyya, owed its transformation to the public works of al-Nasir, particularly the canal he ordered to be dug there in 1325. The new canal, called al-Khalig al-Nasiri and later al-Khalig al-Maghribi (western), was due west and parallel to the city's major canal, al-Khalig al-Misri.[10] When the new canal was completed, al-Nasir Muhammad asked the people to build there "so that all the land between al-Maqs and the shore of the Nile in Bulaq was built upon."[11] During the reign of al-Nasir, the population of Cairo was at its highest point of 500,000–600,000 persons and it had attained almost the same dimensions it had at the time of the French invasion.[12]

Al-Maqs, once the principal city port, was essentially stranded by the recession of the Nile beginning at the time of Salah al-Din, eventually leaving a broad fertile plain between the former port and the river. This process, which ceded twice as much land as in the previous four centuries, ultimately made the new port of Bulaq the river's edge. Bulaq began its development as the city's major port in the last half of the fifteenth century as part of a more general tendency toward the urban development in the northern and western sections of Cairo. Bulaq's prosperity and importance through the Ottoman period resulted from its position as the key link in

the East-West trade, which underlay the prosperity of the city from the fifteenth century on.[13] Trade had become an increasingly important source of revenue for the Mamluks since Sultan Barsbay (1422–38) established a state monopoly over the spice trade, cutting out the middlemen, the so-called Karimi merchants. Also, through the trade in coffee during the Ottoman period, Egypt was able to compensate for decline in revenue from the spice trade as European merchants and traders established themselves in the Indian Ocean. In the mid-eighteenth century, the resurgent Mamluks increased the revenues available to them when the fusion of the beylicate and the regiments resulted in the beys' taking control of the tax revenues from the city's customs houses. By the eighteenth century, the network of *wakala*s and *khan*s and the port at Bulaq that facilitated the East-West trade were already in place.[14] The city's commercial economy, although not as vibrant as it was at the apogee of the trade in spices and other luxury goods from the East, was an important source of investment opportunities for the women of the Mamluk households, as their religious endowment deeds demonstrate.

Another late-fifteenth-century development that transformed the city, beside the development of Bulaq, was the settlement of Azbakiyya.[15] During the reign of Qaytbay (1467–96), Azbakiyya was founded by Azbak Min Tutuh, a *mamluk* of Sultan Barsbay and later of Sultan Jaqmaq. Azbak married the daughter of Sultan Jaqmaq and, after her death, her sister. He was grand chamberlain and governor of Syria before becoming commander in chief of the armies of Sultan Qaytbay. He was a Circassian and one of the wealthiest and most powerful amirs of his time. He built his palace on the southeastern corner of the *birka* and obtained his water from the Nasiri (Maghribi) canal. Following his example, others built elegant residences near the lake so that Azbak was encouraged to enlarge his project by adding a congregational mosque as well as commercial structures and other dwellings.[16] Azbakiyya suffered during the Ottoman conquest when soldiers plundered its houses and carried off the handsome woodwork and ironwork that adorned them.[17] Subsequently it went into decline until the seventeenth century when it was rediscovered as a residential neighborhood by Shaykh al-Islam Zayn al-Abidin al-Siddiqi, who built his house there.[18]

Thus, by the end of the fifteenth century, Cairo's shape and size remained virtually constant for three hundred years after the Ottoman conquest. So, too, did the public and domestic architecture of the city. Various scholars have offered explanations of why Mamluk architectural forms continued to be predominant during the Ottoman period until the accession to power of Muhammad 'Ali. Ulku Bates has pointed out that Cairo was a Sunni Islamic city that at the beginning of the sixteenth century had more monumental Islamic structures than did Istanbul at that time.[19] Concerning the city's domestic architecture, Jacques Revault has contended that "seduced by the charms and the real qualities of this architecture, the conquering Turks did not seem to be concerned to bring any serious modification, which appeared only in certain decorative details."[20] Although these arguments offer sound explanations for the continuity of Mamluk architecture during the Ottoman period, there are other, equally compelling, reasons.

First, Islamic structures such as schools and mosques built by Ottoman officials in the European provinces of the empire were usually supported by *waqf*s endowed by their founders with funds from local landholdings. However, in Egypt after the conquest, fiefs were eliminated and land was administered through the *emanet* system in which salaried agents of the Porte collected the taxes. Throughout the first part of the seventeenth century, the process of converting the *emanet* system to a tax-farming *(iltizam)* system took place, and by the end of the century, it was controlled by the resurgent beylicate. As Stanford J. Shaw has noted, the transformation from *emanet* to *iltizam* was both cause and manifestation of the process by which the Mamluk houses were formed and came to power.[21] Thus the system of land tenure and tax collection in Egypt meant that Ottoman officials did not have the large sums at their command to finance constructions like those of the Ottoman officials in the Balkans.

Second, the tenure of Ottoman governors was short. As the Mamluk system reasserted itself, the beys often rejected the appointed governor or cut short his tenure. Also, the Mamluk resurgence meant not only that the beylicate gained control of rural tax farms but also that it began to dominate the Ottoman administration as well. According to Shaw, the year 1671

was the last year in which officials sent from the Porte held effective power in the major administrative positions of the Ottoman hierarchy.

In sum, the inability of the Porte to Ottomanize monumental and domestic architecture in Cairo may reflect its inability to exert or maintain its hegemony over the country. Thus the symbols and signs of power expressed architecturally and spatially remained Mamluk until the nineteenth century and the reign of Muhammad ‘Ali, who was able to use monumental architecture and urban design to symbolize his autocratic control of the country. Perhaps his most visible symbol and the most predominant example of Ottoman design in Cairo was Muhammad ‘Ali's mosque, built in Turkish Baroque style on the highest point inside the Citadel complex, which he took over as his seat of power.

The Social Geography of Cairo

By the end of the eighteenth century at the time of the French invasion, the population of Egypt was 2.5 million and Cairo's was 300,000, according to Jacques Joseph Gaspard Antoine Chabrol in his "Essai sur les Moeurs des Habitants Modernes de l'Egypte" in the *Description de l'Egypte*.[22] For much of the century, Cairo was a prosperous, lively, diverse, and densely populated city.[23] Although overwhelmingly Muslim, there were also Christians and Jews worshipping at twenty-seven churches and ten synagogues. For Muslims, there were 233 mosques in the city where five times a day the *mu‘azzin*s climbed the minarets and chanted the call to prayer, which rang out across the city. The largest of the mosques were Ibn Tulun, al-Azhar, and Sultan Hasan, all jewels of Islamic architecture. Among the population were Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, Turks, and North Africans as well as Europeans living in the so-called French quarter. Altogether, one-quarter of the city was made up of non-Egyptians and religious minorities.

The city had fifty-six markets, or *suq*s, attesting to its continuing commercial importance, particularly in the transit trade as well as in textile production. One of the major markets, the *suq al-muski,* was devoted to the sale of goods from Europe. The city's economy provided a livelihood for 9,000 small and large merchants and 25,000 artisans as well as 30,000

workers such as water carriers, porters, house servants, and daily laborers of all kinds. The forty-five public baths in the city were not just for ordinary Cairenes who could not afford baths in their homes, but for men and women of all classes. The baths provided a venue for socializing and for amusements, like listening to music, particularly for women. Men could frequent one of the two hundred cafes in Cairo, not counting those in the old Fatimid city, al-Qahira, or Bulaq. Entertainment was never far away since the streets were a stage for puppeteers, magicians, storytellers, and dancers.

The baths and the cafes provided an escape from the intense commercial and artisanal activity of the city. Meanwhile, the city's elite, *"les grands"* or the Mamluks, as well as the shaykhs, had gardens bearing their names, such as that of Qasim Bey, which became a meeting place for members of the French Institute and the Commission of Arts and Sciences. J. B. Jomard, in his essay "Description de la Ville et de la Citadelle du Caire" for the *Description de l'Egypt,* wrote a glowing description of the beauty and tranquility of the gardens with their orange and lemon trees, the sycamores and acacias, and the banana trees with their gigantic leaves. "One smokes aromatic tobacco," Jomard wrote, "and breathes all year air imbued with the sweetest perfumes."[24]

Water for the residents of the city was carried from the Nile on camels. A network of *sabil-kuttab*s, public water fountains with Qur'anic schools above, provided water free to the city's residents. As Jomard noted, most of the public fountains were funded as acts of charity through religious endowments (*waqf*s) that also supported the schools above. An aqueduct carried water from the Nile to the Citadel, where the Ottoman governor and the military garrison were located. Jomard counted sixty principal *sabil-kuttab*s and affirmed their importance to the well-being of the city's residents by providing water and education.[25]

As he traversed the city and learned about its neighborhoods, Jomard was struck by Cairo's lack of resemblance to the cities of Europe, particularly in the irregularity of its streets, their shortness, and the gates that the inhabitants open "when they please." Jomard confessed that he was perplexed by the city's geography and the inaccessibility of its fifty-three *hara*s, or quarters, so much so that "the interior of Cairo is very difficult to know in its entirety."[26]

The residential housing for the inhabitants of the city ranged from two to four stories, with workers living in close quarters in tenements (*rab'*s). The favorite neighborhoods of the city's elite, including the Mamluks, were around the *birka*s, the ponds or small lakes that filled with the floodwaters of the Nile. Among the most prestigious of the twelve *birka*s listed by Jomard were the Birkat al-Fil, so named because it resembled an elephant's head, and the Birkat al-Azbakiyya, which was by far the most elite neighborhood in the city, housing the most powerful Mamluks and the richest merchants. Like others before him, Jomard rhapsodized about the beauty of Azbakiyya, noting in particular the illuminated boats sailing on the *birka* at night, a sight he described as "picturesque."[27]

By the time of the French expedition, the Mamluks, who numbered between 10,500 and 12,000, had been deserting the old Fatimid city, al-Qahira, for neighborhoods outside the city's walls and as far west as the Birkat al-Azbakiyya.[28] The movement of the Mamluks away from the Citadel, the seat of Ottoman power, reflected the decline of the Ottoman administration in Egypt and the rise in power of the Mamluks. Additionally, the neighborhoods where Mamluks lived represented not random choices by individual Mamluks but rather the hierarchy within the Mamluk system.

Raymond's *Essai de Geographie des Quartiers de Residence Aristocratique au Caire au XVIIIème Siècle* charts the residential patterns of the Mamluks through three periods: from the Ottoman conquest to 1650, from 1650 to 1755, and from 1755 to the French invasion of 1798. Raymond has described the Mamluk aristocracy as the beys and *kashif*s and the officers of the military corps.[29] Raymond traces the size over time of the Mamluk elite in four neighborhoods: (1) al-Qahira, the old walled Fatimid city; (2) the quarter of the Citadel including the region actually northwest of the Citadel bounded on the north by al-Qahira and on the west by the street running south from Bab Zuwayla to Darb al-Khalifa; (3) the right bank of the canal called al-Khalig al-Misri including the Birkat al-Fil; and (4) the left bank of the canal including Azbakiyya.

During the first phase, 1517–1650, 17 percent of the aristocratic residences were in al-Qahira; 36 percent were in the neighborhood of the Citadel; 26 percent were on the right bank of the canal (al-Khalig) with 17

percent of those around the Birkat al-Fil; and 19 percent were on the left bank of the canal with 3 percent in Azbakiyya. During the second phase, from 1650 to 1755, 6 percent of the residences were in al-Qahira; 17 percent were in the neighborhood of the Citadel; 57 percent were on the right bank of the canal with 40 percent of those around the Birkat al-Fil; and 19 percent were on the left bank of the canal with 4 percent of those in Azbakiyya. In the third and final phase between 1755 and 1798, 16 percent of the residences were in al-Qahira; 10 percent were in the neighborhood of the Citadel; 27 percent were on the right bank of the canal with 20 percent of those around the Birkat al-Fil; and 45 percent were on the left bank of the canal with 14 percent of those in Azbakiyya.

The most striking development from the first to the second period was the virtual abandonment by the beys of al-Qahira and the neighborhood of the Citadel, effectively the inner city during this period. The flight from the neighborhood of the Citadel was due in part to the weakened power of the Ottoman governor and the rise to dominance of the beylicate,

Table 5
Residential Patterns of Highest-Ranking Mamluks
(Beys and *Kashif*s) in the Neighborhoods Below

	Period I *1516–1650*	Period II *1650–1755*	Period III *1755–98*
1. Al-Qahira	17%	6%	16%
2. Citadel	36%	17%	10%
3. Right Bank of the Main Canal	26%	57%	27%
Birkat al-Fil	17%	40%	20%
4. Left Bank of the Main Canal	19%	19%	45%
Azbakiyya	3%	4%	14%

Source: André Raymond, *Essai de Geographie des Quartiers de Residence Aristocratique au Cairo au XVIIIe Siècle.*

which allowed the beys to move farther from the Ottoman seat of power. In addition, as Raymond has noted, the first half of the eighteenth century was a period of successive crises and armed conflicts that centered around Rumayla near the Sultan Hasan mosque. In the civil war of 1711, for example, armed conflict took place around Sultan Hasan mosque and in the quarters between Rumayla and Bab Zuwayla. Many inhabitants of the neighborhood of the Citadel abandoned their homes, and a great number of homes around Rumayla were destroyed by bombardment or by fire.[30] In the second period as well, the old Fatimid city was virtually empty of beys and *kashif*s. The chief reason is undoubtedly the intense artisanal and commercial activity of the area, which included 31 of the 77 *suq*s (markets) mentioned in the *Description de l'Egypte,* 12 of 13 *khan*s, and 139 of 200 *wakala*s.[31] It is not surprising, then, that the beys and *kashif*s sought safer and more tranquil neighborhoods with sufficient space for their large palaces, such as the Birkat al-Fil, which by 1755 had the highest percentage of Mamluk elite of any other neighborhood.

From the evidence Raymond has presented, we can see that it was during the second period (1650–1755) that the hierarchy within the Mamluk system began to be reflected in the geography of the neighborhoods. The favorite neighborhood of the Mamluk elite during this period was the Birkat al-Fil, and there was a strict hierarchy of residences around the *birka,* with beys the only inhabitants of the neighborhoods of Dawudiyya on the north shore and of Qawsun on the east bank. Of all the neighborhoods there, Qawsun was the most exclusive. Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Qazdughli and Ridwan Katkhuda al-Galfi, the two dominant amirs around mid-century, had their residences there.

After 1755 and until the French invasion, the beys continued to move westward, and the Birkat al-Fil was superseded as the neighborhood of choice by Azbakiyya and particularly the western shore of the *birka.* During this period, officers and *kashif*s virtually disappeared from the exclusive neighborhoods of Dawudiyya and Qawsun in the Birkat al-Fil quarter. Officers continued to live on the western and southern shores of the *birka,* while *kashif*s established themselves west of the canal in the al-Nasiriyya neighborhood. The exclusivity of the neighborhood inhabited by *kashif*s reflected the higher status they had in the Mamluk system relative to

military officers. In the Mamluk system, the rank of *kashif* had become an intermediary step before promotion to the rank of bey. The *kashif* Ibrahim al-Sinnari, the *katkhuda* of Murad Bey, for example, built his residence in al-Nasiriyya shortly before the French invasion. He was not to live in it very long since it was taken over by French forces and became the center of the savants and the first home of the French Institute. Most of the residences of officers were not in the Birkat al-Fil neighborhood or in al-Nasiriyya but south of the old Fatimid city and in certain neighborhoods around the Citadel. Some officers continued to live in al-Qahira, which no doubt reflected the close ties between the military and the popular classes. After 1755, when power was shifting to the beylicate and was being consolidated in the Qazdughli *bayt,* the residential patterns of the military officers reflected their declining power, loss of autonomy, and subordination within the late-eighteenth-century Mamluk system.

When Muhammad Bey al-Alfi was a *kashif,* he lived in the Shaykh al-Zalam neighborhood. However, when he ascended to the rank of bey, he established himself in Qawsun and eventually in his mansion on the shores of the lake at Azbakiyya. Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir left his residence in Darb al-Gamamiz after the death of his patron, Muhammad Bey, and installed himself in the residence of his former patron at Qawsun.

After 1755, when there was a dramatic increase in the growth of Azbakiyya, particularly around the *birka,* it became customary for the dominant amirs to have homes in either Qawsun or Dawudiyya on the Birkat al-Fil and another along the shores of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya. This was the case with Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Qazdughli and Ridwan Katkhuda al-Galfi, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, Isma'il Bey al-Kabir, Murad Bey, Muhammad Bey al-Alfi, and Ibrahim Bey al-Kabir. The most exclusive area of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya was the western shore, where in 1770 'Ali Bey al-Kabir built a home for himself and his wife Nafisa al-Bayda, and where, in 1787, Muhammad Bey al-Alfi built his palace that was taken over by Bonaparte.

Although it appears that the number of elite residences in al-Qahira increased between 1755 and 1798, Raymond asserts that these residences were *petites maisons,* secondary homes that functioned as safe havens in times of trouble.[32] Each amir had, in addition to his principal residence

where he lived with his family and *mamluk*s, houses where he kept money, jewels, and other valuables. In times of crisis and if he feared defeat or exile, he would disperse his valuables to his various petites maisons, leaving his principal residence practically empty. Raymond noted, however, that this precaution was seldom successful since the victorious Mamluk faction would invariably interrogate the guardian of the empty house, learn the whereabouts of the *petite maison,* and seize the defeated amir's treasures.[33] When Isma'il Bey defeated his rivals, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey, he installed his *mamluk*s in the palaces of the defeated amirs. However, in the following year, 1778, when he was defeated by his rivals and went into exile, his followers retreated to their *petites maisons.*[34] Sitt Nafisa, when she was married to Murad Bey after the death of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, had a *petite maison* in al-Qahira near the Bayt al-Qadi.

After the decline of Azbakiyya following the Ottoman conquest, the neighborhood rebounded, with residential development occurring primarily on the eastern and southern shores until after the mid-eighteenth century when the western shore became the most exclusive neighborhood. As a residential neighborhood, Azbakiyya was first associated with the shaykhs and *tujjar* (merchants). The head of the Bakri Sufi order had his house on the shore of the *birka*. The Bakris owned a series of residences and commercial structures in the neighborhood of 'Abd al-Haqq al-Sunbati.[35] Azbakiyya also became a favorite residential neighborhood of the wealthy merchants who often had their principal residence and place of business in nearby al-Qahira. The most famous of the merchant families to live in Azabakiyya was the Sharaybi family, whose fortune was made in the coffee trade. It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that the first bey, Salim Bey, built his residence close to the Sharaybi's.[36]

The Sharaybi palace complex stood on the site of Azbak's palace on the lane named al-'Ataba al-Zarqa. It was known by the name of the lane and was also called al-Talat al-Walliyya, a term used during the Ottoman period for a trefoil arch. The Sharaybi family married into the Qazdughli *bayt* to which their neighbor, 'Uthman Katkhuda, belonged. Eventually the Sharaybi home became the property of Ridwan Bey al-Galfi, *katkhuda* of the 'Azaban, whose son-in-law sold the house to his patron, Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab.[37]

'Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli began his career as a *mamluk* of Hasan al-Qazdughli and became chief of customs and head of the Janissaries. He was killed in 1736, a year after his complex at Azbakiyya was completed in the 'Abd al-Haqq al-Sunbati quarter close to the Bakri residence. Although only the mosque remains standing, the complex can be reconstructed textually from the endowment deed *(waqfiyya)* establishing it. In addition to the mosque, the complex included a *sabil-kuttab* (a public fountain with a Qur'anic school above it), a *rab'* (tenement) for workers and artisans with five living units, a bath *(hammam),* and a waterwheel. 'Uthman's residence was on the *birka* side and consisted of a large two-court-yard house with a *mandara* (the indoor reception room for men), a *maq'ad* (the outdoor reception area for men), and a *qa'a* (the home's primary salon) that served as the center of family life and as a reception room for the mistress of the house and her female guests, as well as stables, storerooms, a pavilion facing the water, and five additional houses.[38]

In 1776 Azabakiyya was ravaged by fire but recovered in less than a year. The French took over Azbakiyya after the invasion in 1798 and transformed the neighborhood into the city's main square. Napoleon celebrated French Day there with speeches, parades, fireworks, and paintings displaying the defeat of the Mamluks. He also insisted that the birthday *(mawlid)* of the Prophet Muhammad be celebrated there as usual. During their brief occupation of the country, the French embarked on a series of alterations to the city, including Azbakiyya, where a broad street called Muski Street was constructed from the Mosque of Azbak through the French quarter. However, the character of Azbakiyya was not decisively altered until the reign of Muhammad 'Ali.

The Bayt al-Razzaz and Its Neighborhood

The mistress of the Razzaz palace, sitting in one of the magnificent bay windows overhanging Bab al-Wazir Street but shielded from the gaze of pedestrians below by the screens of turned wood called *mashrabiyya,* could look down on the lively urban street life that characterized the Tabbana quarter where she lived. In the latter half of the century, the neighborhood

surrounding the house we know as the Bayt al-Razzaz was already a noisy, bustling, crowded commercial quarter. Al-Razzaz palace straddled two of the most important commercial streets leading from Bab Zuwayla to Rumayla Square at the foot of the Citadel: Shari' Suq al-Silah/Suwayqat al'Izza on the *salamlik,* or men's side of the house, and Shari' Bab al-Wazir on the *haramlik,* or women's side. The *salamlik,* the men's reception area, could be entered by horseback along a path leading to the overhanging porch *(maq'ad)* that served as an outdoor sitting area. Visitors entered the *haramlik,* the women's/family quarters of the house, through a gate and a covered passageway leading to a quiet interior garden with an overhanging window screened in *mashrabiyya.*

Unlike the men's side of the house, it was closed in upon itself, reflecting the society's emphasis on family privacy and the elite's ability to pay for the architectural design and structure that protected it. The *haramlik* was open to the quarter's street life only through the magnificent overhanging windows screened in *mashrabiyya* to protect the privacy of the household and deflect the gaze of passersby from the faces of its women.

Not far from the house was the Qasabat Ridwan, the famous covered market that is known today as the Street of the Tentmakers. Also nearby was Bab Zuwayla, one of the oldest and most famous gates of the city, which opened onto al-Qahira, the old Fatimid city where most of the city's *khan*s and *wakala*s were located, including the *wakala* of Nafisa al-Bayda. North of the palace, the quarter between Bab Zuwayla and Bab al-Kharq was an important center of artisanal production. As for the neighborhood surrounding the palace, it had twenty-seven *wakala*s and *khan*s and eleven markets *(suq*s), including two of the city's most important, the Suq al-Silah, the arms market, and the Suq al-Khayl, where all manner of four-legged transport was bought and sold, including horses, mules, donkeys, and camels. The Suq al-Silah had eight *wakala*s and *khan*s devoted to it exclusively. The name Suq al-Silah was not only the name of the market but also of the street that ran from the eastern wall to Sultan Hasan Mosque and Rumayla Square.

C. S. Sonnini, who was in Cairo in 1778, was clearly impressed by the city and its position at the center of a vast trading network. He wrote the

3. The garden on the harem side of the Bayt al-Razzaz with a window box screened in *mashrabiyya*; the door giving entry into the harem is visible in the lower right corner of the photo.

4. The men's outdoor reception area of the Bayt al-Razzaz known as the *maqʻad*.

following lyrical description of Cairo's commercial importance in the late eighteenth century:

> Cairo, as has already been observed, was the emporium of the trade of almost every quarter of the world. The warehouses in that city were filled with the manufactures of India, and those silky stuffs of astonishing finess [*sic*] wove from the wool of Cassimere. In others, the diamond of Goldconda shone with dazzling brilliancy; the pearl of the Eastern ocean, less effulgent, modestly exhibited its argent rays; and the porcelain of Japan displayed its lively and never-fading colours. Some of the latter were scented with an immense quantity of the fragrant berries of the coffee trade of Yemen, and the spices of the Molucca Islands; while the sweetest essences and most delicate perfumes that Arabia and Africa could afford, odoriferous woods, as precious as gold, imparted to others a delightful mixture of the most exquisite exhalations. The production of the manufactories of Europe are there equally abundant; and burning Africa sends thither, from her inomost [*sic*] recesses, her gold, ivory, gums, and slaves.[39]

In the travel literature of Europeans visiting Cairo, the city is described as a place where many of the activities of daily life took place in or adjacent to the streets, particularly in the commercial and artisanal neighborhoods. In the *rab'*s (tenements) of the city's lower classes, the small living quarters did not have a separate room where the man of the family could entertain his friends. So, the *mastaba* (stone bench) on the street at the entrance to the *rab'* became the men's meeting place, serving the same function as the *mandara* in the homes of the elite, like the Bayt al-Razzaz. At the end of the century, the French counted two hundred cafes in the city, not including those in Old Cairo and Bulaq, where men gathered to talk, smoke their water pipes, and listen to musicians and storytellers. The city's public squares were not only centers of buying and selling but also informal gathering places for men and women where they could be entertained by musicians, jugglers, and tumblers. The road to Bulaq was noted for its poets who improvised poems in honor of passersby in the hope of earning a few coins. Twice a week the Mamluks, mounted on horseback and accompanied by their servants and slaves, used the public squares for their equestrian games. In the game of *garid,* Mamluks on opposing sides would charge each other two by two with lances four feet long. Others, while riding at full gallop, would throw balls into a pot in a huge heap of sand.[40]

As one of the major arteries between the Bab Zuwayla gate and Rumayla, Shari' Bab al-Wazir Street, which abutted the Bayt al-Razzaz on the *haramlik* side, was no doubt a lively urban thoroughfare lined with shops, cafes, and mosques including the Mosque of Sultan Sha'ban adjacent to the palace. From her perch above the street, the mistress of al-Razzaz palace could look down on an animated street scene of people, donkeys, and dogs jostling each other for space in the crowded thoroughfare. She was likely to see artisans on their way to the workshops and shoppers going to and from the markets, donkeys carrying people and goods, and even camels carrying merchandise to the nearby *wakala*s and *khan*s. Perhaps there were jugglers in the street gratefully accepting the coins tossed at them by amused passersby or monkeys dressed like Europeans, expressing the Cairene contempt for European dress and manners, or snake charmers or maybe even a puppet show. Perhaps the mistress of the house would call the children to join her at the window and watch as the puppets quarreled

and fought with each other to the delighted laughter of the crowd. According to Carsten Niebuhr, in the evening the wealthy shut themselves up in their harems. While admitting that Europeans did not know what went on there, he nevertheless described the entertainment in the harem based on European stereotypes of "Oriental" women: "But as the women of the East are excessively ignorant, and merely great children, it is very probably that the amusements of the harem are extremely childlike."[41]

Niebuhr, one of five Danish travelers sent by the king of Denmark in 1761 to explore Egypt and Arabia, appears to have been fascinated by Egyptian popular culture and street life, which he described in rich detail—the puppet shows, the jugglers, and the monkeys. Although he did not expect to see a play in Egypt, he discovered that there were numerous companies of players including Christians, Jews, and Muslims.[42] The plays were put on in the courtyard of houses with a screen serving as the changing room for the players. The play that Niebuhr saw in the company of an Italian friend was in Arabic, and the female role was played by a man. Niebuhr reported that the crowd did not like the play and expressed its disapproval of the fairly simple plot by shouting at the cast, compelling the players to stop.[43]

European visitors who recorded detailed descriptions of Cairo and its street life also reported that Europe and Europeans were held in contempt by Egyptians, which the Europeans attributed to the Muslims' "hatred" of Christianity. Savary wrote that one Egyptian would insult another by calling him a "Frank," the Egyptian term for Europeans.[44] Sonnini, a French traveler who visited Egypt from 1777 to 1778 and published his travel journal two years later, reported that the small European community composed largely of merchants was persecuted, ill treated, and living in perpetual fear such that these "Franks" rarely left the European quarter located west of the canal after dark.[45] For example, Niebuhr reported an incident in which a European merchant and a doctor were beaten.[46] European men who visited Cairo were generally humiliated to learn that the use of horses was reserved to the Mamluks exclusively and that Europeans, like the members of the nonelite classes and women, were relegated to donkeys. It is not clear from their writings if the Europeans were most angry because they were forced to defer to men they considered inferior to themselves or because they had to use the same method of transport as women. Niebuhr described

himself as so mortified at having to dismount from his donkey as mounted Mamluks passed by while his two "Mussulman" servants remained on theirs that he gave up riding and went everywhere on foot.[47]

Sonnini described in great detail how Europeans were expected to behave in the presence of Mamluks:

> In the few excursions which our merchants made out of their "country," mounted upon asses, fear was ever at their back. They were under the necessity of paying particular attention to persons who were either before or behind them. If a Mamluk, a priest, or a man in office, appeared, they made way, dismounted, placed their right hand upon their breast, as a mark of respect, and durst not proceed on their way till the exacting and haughty Mussulman had passed on, and then only to repeat, in a few moments, the same irksome ceremony. When from absence of mind they chanced to neglect these abject duties of slavery, a very inhuman method was employed to bring the performance of them to their recollection. A class of domestics . . . armed with great sticks, six feet in length, and clad in a long black robe, with sleeves tucked up under the armpits, by means of a cord crossing on the back, attended on foot the men in power, and with heavy blows reminded the Franks of their inattention. Of two French merchants with whom I was acquainted in Cairo, the one had his leg, and the other his neck broken, in consequence of an omission of this tyrannical etiquette.[48]

Life on the Shores of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya

While the mistress of the Razzaz palace lived in the heart of a commercial and artisanal neighborhood with its vibrant street life and bustling shops and workshops, Nafisa al-Bayda's palace was in the most exclusive section of an already elite neighborhood, the western shore of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya. Like others who were abandoning the neighborhood between Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel, Sitt Nafisa was escaping the noise and bustle of commerce and industry to find peace and tranquility on the shore of the *birka*. Sitt Nafisa's neighbors included the most important amirs of the late eighteenth century, among them her second husband, Murad Bey; his partner in the duumvirate that dominated Egypt for most of the last quarter

of the century, Ibrahim Bey; their rival and ally of the Ottomans, Isma'il Bey; and Murad's freed slave and protégé, Muhammad Bey al-Alfi, whose palace on the western shore was taken over by Napoleon as his residence. The neighborhood of the Birkat al-Azbakiyya shows us the other face of eighteenth-century Cairo with its imposing palaces, pleasure boats on the *birka,* and cool, fragrant gardens.

When the Nile flood began in the middle of June, the water in the *birka*s began to rise. Ever since the fifteenth century when Azbak built his complex at Azbakiyya, European travelers wrote rapturous accounts of the beauty and pleasures of life along the *birka*. One of these accounts by Savary describes the night following the ceremony of the opening of the main canal, al-Khalig al-Misri, when the Nile flood was at its height, usually in mid-August. According to Savary, nowhere in the city were the festivities more impressive than on the Birkat al-Azbakiyya:

> This place is the largest in the city, almost a half-league in circumference. It forms an immense basin surrounded by the palaces of the beys, lit up by lights of many colors. Many thousands of boats, with lamps suspended from their masts, produce a moving illumination whose aspects vary each instant. The purity of the sky, almost never veiled by mists, the gold of the stars which glitter on a background of azure, the fires of so many lights repeated on the water are such that one enjoys on these charming promenades the clearness of day and the delicious freshness of night.[49]

The opening of the main canal at the height of the Nile flood was one of the city's most important public spectacles. Chabrol in his essay for the *Description de l'Egypte,* the monumental work produced by the savants who accompanied Napoleon, described the breaking down of the earthen dyke that separated the river from the canal and the festivities marking the event.[50] The Ottoman governor (pasha) presided over the event in the presence of the city's dignitaries including the beys and their retinues, the regiments and their officers, and officials like the chief judge *(qadi),* who watched the spectacle from a large pavilion on the canal bank. When the pasha gave the signal, workers broke down the dyke. The crowd shouted; music played; cannons were fired; and fireworks were set off. When the

canal was open, water flowed rapidly through the streets, making lakes of public places. Afterward, the pasha threw a handful of silver and gold pieces into the river, and the men on the banks dove into the water to retrieve them. Savary estimated the size of the crowd participating in the opening he witnessed at 300,000 persons.[51] Volney, who was in Egypt about the same time, estimated the total population of Cairo at 600,000.[52] So, if Savary is correct in his crowd estimate, approximately half the population of the city attended the opening of the canal.

The festivities continued into the night with people celebrating in boats on the river or walking in the streets carrying fruits and other refreshments. On the streets were musicians, jugglers, snake charmers, magicians, and the famous dancers, the ‘alma*s (colloq. ‘alima*), whose sensuous movements and scanty dress shocked the Europeans.[53] The streets, mosques, and minarets were illuminated with sticks of burning resinous wood in chafing dishes or lamps attached to long poles. On nights of celebration like the one following the opening of the canal, after sundown during Ramadan, or during the birthday *(mawlid)* of the Prophet, the streets were crowded and noisy and the gates to the *harat* (quarters) remained open after nightfall. On every other night, the gates would be shut and guarded by a *janissary* paid by the residents of the quarter, and strangers would be barred from entering.

For about eight months of the year, the *birka*s would remain full; then the waters would subside and grass would cover the bottom. It is not surprising that these areas became the favored residential neighborhoods of the elite. Along the *birka*s, the canals, and the Nile, the residences of the elite often included large gardens planted in sweet-smelling flowers, vines, and fruit trees. Vivant Denon, who was a member of the French Institute at Cairo and accompanied the French troops to Egypt, spent a night in the deserted palace of Murad Bey in Giza. After the invasion, Murad, with the other beys, retreated to Upper Egypt to continue the resistance to the French. Denon left a description of the garden that not only conveys its beauty but also its appeal to the senses, conveying the sights, sounds, smells, and sensual delights where "tents or kiosks are pitched under the thick branches of a cluster of sycamores, and open at pleasure upon a fragrant underwood of orange and jasmine."[54]

Sitt Nafisa probably sailed on the Birkat al-Azbakiyya as did other women of her rank and station where they were easily identified because their boats were so richly decorated and because they had a cabin on the deck enclosed in *mashrabiyya* screens to protect the women inside from the gaze of men walking on shore or sailing in nearby boats. The *Description de L'Egypte* contains engraved plates of the Birkat al-Fil and the Birkat al-Azbakiyya in which the boats belonging to women are clearly identifiable.[55] European travelers like Savary noted the presence of women's boats on the Nile during the opening of the main canal. From the cabin perched on the deck of the boat, women were able to see the spectacle on shore and enjoy the music and entertainment without transgressing social and Islamic norms by mingling with the crowds on the riverbank or along the *birka*.

Women and City Life

Upper-class women, veiled and cloaked, were observed by European travelers riding about the city on the backs of donkeys. Women like the mistress of the Razzaz palace or Sitt Nafisa could leave their homes regularly to visit family and friends, to make their Friday visits to the cemetery and the tombs of their relatives, and to go to the baths. They would also walk in wedding processions, accompanying a bride to the home of her new husband. Niebuhr described a typical wedding procession: "The bride, closely covered from head to foot, walked under a canopy borne by four men, between two women, who conducted her. Several slaves walked before, some playing on the tambourine, others bearing fly-flaps, and others sprinkling scented waters. She was followed by a number of women, and by some musicians, riding upon asses. A number of servants attended, performing as they passed. All the women in the procession cried incessantly 'Lu, lu, lu.' If the procession takes place at night, slaves attend with '*flambeaus*.'"[56]

Women of all classes visited the cemeteries and the tombs of their relatives on Fridays. Chabrol in his "Essai sur les Moeurs des Habitants de L'Egypte" depicted in almost poetic terms the Friday scene in a cemetery. He described seeing whole families seated around the tombs spread out across the plain, dispersed here and there under the acacias and the sycamores, and the veils of the women floating in the air.[57]

Sonnini described meeting by chance the harem of a bey

> taking an airing in the environs of Cairo. An equivocal figure, a eunuch of
> a mean but fierce countenance, preceded the women on a beautiful horse,
> covered with gold, silver, and embroidery. The ladies were mounted on the
> finest asses. The richest metals glittered on the bridles of these animals;
> and a magnificent piece of tapestry was thrown over their saddles and
> cruppers, and hung down to the ground. It is to be presumed that this
> was the cavalcade of beauty. But these charmers were masked with thick
> veils, and so wrapped up in various kinds of drapery, that neither feature
> nor form could be seen of any one of them, and they appeared only like
> so many shapeless figures. Such meetings were by no means pleasant to
> Europeans, who were obliged to alight as a mark of respect, and take
> care to avoid not only the appearance of looking the ladies in the face,
> which, in fact, it was impossible to distinguish, but even of turning their
> eyes towards them; and a slight glance at them as they passed was all that
> could be risked.[58]

Although European travelers to Egypt record the appearance and
activities of elite women in their published works, at the same time they
contradict the evidence of their own observations by describing Mamluk
women as odalisques and virtual prisoners in their harems. In his descrip-
tion of Murad Bey's garden at Giza, Denon describes the Oriental woman
as an obedient and contented slave, giving herself willingly to her master.
Enclosed in her harem or in the walled garden of a palace, her chief purpose
in life was to satisfy the sexual desires of men. Denon, after describing the
flowers and fragrances of Murad's garden, adds the following about the
pleasures to be enjoyed there:

> To this is added the voluptuous pleasure of enjoyments still but imper-
> fectly known to us, but which we may conceive; such, for instance, as to
> be attended by young slaves, who unite to elegance of form gentle and
> caressing manners; to be indolently stretched on vast and downy carpets,
> strewed with cushions, in company with some favorite beauty, breathing
> perfumes, and intoxicated with desires; to receive sherbet from the hands
> of a young damsel, whose languishing eyes express the contentment of

willing obedience, and not the constraint of servitude. Surrounded with these delights, the burning African need not envy the inhabitants of Europe; and man may find happiness wherever there is beauty and grace, whether in the gardens of Trianon, or reposed on the banks of the Nile.[59]

Volney, who visited Egypt a couple of years before Sonnini, wrote that the women of the Mamluks were "rigorously sequestered from the society of men. Always closed up in their house, they communicate only with their husbands, their father, the brother and their first cousins; carefully veiled in the streets, scarcely daring to speak to a man, even about business. All must be strangers to them: It would be indecent to look at them and one must let them pass as if they were contagious."[60] Like other Europeans who knew very little about Islam or Egyptian society and culture, Volney blamed the degraded condition of women on the Qur'an, which "does not do them the honor of treating them as part of the human species."[61] He also blamed the government for depriving women of all property and personal liberty, making them dependent on a husband or father, which Volney calls "slavery."[62]

Almost exclusively male in the eighteenth century, travel writers represented Mamluk women as sequestered, sexually enslaved, and without rights over property or their persons. This distorted and one-sided image of Oriental or Eastern women embedded itself in the European consciousness and was given expression in the literary, pictorial, and scholarly representation of Arab and Turkish women. Male travel writers tended to emphasize the sexual sphere of women's lives by describing the harem, which as European Christian males they would almost certainly never have seen firsthand, as virtual prisons where masters or husbands kept scores of women to satisfy their voracious sexual appetites. At the same time, they were ignorant of or misrepresented the rights women had in other spheres, particularly the economic.

Conclusion

Mamluk women, like the men, were transplanted at a young age from their homes in Georgia or Circassia to the city of Cairo, which like the Arabic

language and the Islamic faith they had to learn and integrate into their new lives. From the accounts of travelers and visitors to the city and from the evidence in their religious endowment documents, it is clear that they learned the physical and social geography of the city and how to navigate its various neighborhoods. Although there were constraints on women's movements, they were able to travel about the city and to sail on the Nile and the *birka*s. Veiled and cloaked, Mamluk women rode on the backs of donkeys to the baths, to the homes of friends and family, and to the cemeteries on Fridays. They were present at the religious and secular festivals that punctuated the Islamic year. In short, they were active participants in the social and cultural life of their city and society and in its economic life as well.

Women exercised the most autonomy in the economic sphere, where by exercising their property rights they were able to amass estates of income-producing urban and commercial real estate and agricultural land as well. They understood the city in which they lived well enough to profit handsomely from investments in its commercial and residential economy.

As part of the Mamluk elite, they were aware of the residential hierarchy among the Mamluks that divided the city into neighborhoods that represented architecturally and spatially the rank, status, and wealth of the residents. The home of the mistress of the Bayt al-Razzaz in a crowded, noisy neighborhood between Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel and that of Nafisa al-Bayda in tranquil Azbakiyya, the city's most elite neighborhood, expressed in their built form and location the hierarchy of power and privilege among the Mamluks. The political history of Mamluk Egypt could also be written by tracing the movement of Mamluks out of al-Qahira, the old Fatimid City, to the neighborhoods outside the city walls and progressively west toward Azbakiyya. The flight from the neighborhood of the Citadel was due in part to the weakened power of the Ottoman governor and the rise to dominance of the beylicate, which allowed the beys to move farther and farther from the Ottoman seat of power.

7

The Architecture of Seclusion

In Search of the Historical Harem

One of the most evocative and provocative images of the Orient is that of the woman of the harem. In the painting *Odalisque with Slave* by John Auguste Ingres, the odalisque is depicted reclining on a chaise, bare-breasted, with her hands clasped behind her neck and with the flimsiest wisp of material draped over her hips. Here is the quintessential denizen of the harem in the Western imagination. In Western art and literature, in travel accounts and memoirs, the harem has been portrayed as a place where idle, pampered women are maintained for a single purpose, to satisfy the voracious sexual appetite of the master of the household. This image of the woman of the harem has served as a trope for the overall degradation and low status of women in the Middle East and the wider Islamic world and by extension for the backwardness and depravity of the society as a whole.

Western male travelers wrote about harem women with a mixture of righteous condemnation and longing. At one and the same time, they described harem women as prisoners of male lust and as beauties with "languishing" eyes who were the willing sexual partners of their masters, obedient but not constrained.[1] Western men who traveled east from societies that enforced monogamy and made divorce difficult if not impossible clearly envied what they imagined as the virtually unrestricted access of Muslim men to women's bodies. At the same time, they used the harem, polygamy, and veiling as metaphors for the inferiority of Islamic civilization. If civilizations were to be judged at least in part by the way women were treated, then Western men could congratulate themselves on the superiority of their

own culture where there were no harems of the kind they imagined existed in the East.

When we examine the lives of elite eighteenth-century women in order to understand how they lived them, we always encounter the harem and the distorted image of it reflected across the centuries. If this image is more the product of the sometimes fevered imagination of Western men and their desire to assert their superiority to Orientals than of historical research, then our task is to attempt to reconstruct the image on the basis of how women lived it.

Once deconstructed and stripped of its Orientalist baggage, the harem reveals itself as the locus of the Mamluk family's emotional and affective life. Rather than a bounded space that enclosed, sequestered, and imprisoned elite women within it, the harem was instead flexible, mobile, and porous, constructed not by walls or other barriers but by the movement of a woman's body as she moved through space. Moving around her home or walking in the streets, her body constructed the harem as an inviolable space that could not be penetrated or entered by men not closely related to her. Thus the harem was not a place located within an elite house but an inscription on a woman's body that constructed the harem by her movement through interior and exterior space. As such, the distinction between inside and outside the house and the dichotomy between private and public space breaks down because a woman carried the harem with her and created inviolability whether she was inside or outside her home.

The journey from Orientalist conceptions of the harem, or the *haramlik* in Ottoman Turkish usage, to its reimagination as an inscription on a woman's body should start with an examination of the society's social norms, particularly the need for privacy and the separation of marriageable males and females. These social norms were related to the distinctive architecture of the elite home or palace that protected family privacy and restricted the presence of unrelated males as well as to the concealing clothing worn by women when they left their homes. The architectonics of the elite house provided women access to most of the house while the clothing they wore enabled them to use the streets; to visit the cemeteries, their friends and family, and the public baths; and generally to participate in the social life of the city. Although Western travelers of the period often

conflated the harem with polygyny and concubinage, these were unrelated phenomena, as we shall see.

Critiquing the Public/Private Dichotomy

Not particularly helpful to an understanding of the harem is the pre-sumed dichotomy between the public and private spheres, which has been advanced by Western feminist theorists as a way to understand the asym-metry of power between men and women. As Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead wrote in their introduction to *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality,* "the study of gender is inherently a study of relations of asymmetrical power and opportunity."[2] Power is considered to be located in the public sphere, the domain of males, while females, relegated to the private sphere of the home, are deemed to be disempowered and disadvantaged in comparison to men. Lidia Sciama in her critique of the public/private dichotomy as an explanation for the asymmetry in power between men and women in Mediterranean societ-ies described this dichotomy as "women/private/deprived—men/public/privileged."[3]

The public/private dichotomy is not a particularly useful analytical tool for the study of women in eighteenth-century Egypt or for the allocation of space in the aristocratic house. The chief reason is that the household politics of the period means that clear distinctions cannot be made between public and private. The locus of power was the household, which formed the basis of the resurgent Mamluk system. The state with its institutions was represented in Egypt by the Ottoman governor, who became increasingly feeble and impotent as Mamluk power grew and became consolidated in one *bayt,* the Qazdughli, led by 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and his successors. Thus real power was lodged in the households of the amirs, *kashif*s, and officers who constituted the Mamluk ruling elite. These households straddled the divide between public and private because the various realms—the political, the economic, the sexual, and the domestic—were linked and overlapped within the house. The household was not only a seat of power—political, economic, and military—but it was also a residence where domestic life took place. In the context of household politics, sexuality and marriage

were not just private domestic affairs but also political ones since they created links between powerful men and their households.

In the wider context of the city and urban life, the absence of a municipal government with well-defined institutions responsible for providing certain services and maintaining public streets and buildings makes it difficult to affix labels like public and private to eighteenth-century spaces. For example, were the *hara*s (residential quarters of the city), public or private space? The *hara*s, which appear to be public space, were often inhabited by kin, were closed at night by a gate, and were protected by residents who paid a janissary to guard them. Also, can we define the streets as public since the state did not take responsibility for maintaining them? As Janet Abu-Lughod has said, the state had a laissez-faire attitude toward civil society and thus left important functions such as maintaining streets and utilities, guarding neighborhoods, providing lighting, and supervising behavior to other units of society such as the hara.[4] Since the *hara* was also composed of socially related people, the distinction between private and public blurs. The public/private dichotomy appears to be more useful and significant for societies with well-developed institutions that are exclusively or predominantly male and from which women can be excluded. In Egypt, this is a nineteenth-century phenomenon and not a characteristic of eighteenth-century society.

In place of public and private space, other concepts can be more useful analytically. Instead of public space, the concept of *social space* can be substituted and understood as the space unrelated men and women shared while observing certain conventions. For example, when veiled and cloaked upper-class women appeared in the streets, the space they occupied in proximity to men became social space. Women were not trespassing or behaving unconventionally when using the streets, so we need a concept that conveys their ability to be out and about while observing contemporary standards of dress and behavior. Also, at certain times the *mandara* (men's reception room) on the ground floor of elite houses could become social space under certain circumstances. The women of the house did not socialize with the master and his guests in the *mandara*. However, there was often a women's gallery directly above and overlooking the *mandara*, screened in the carved and turned wood known as *mashrabiyya,* that allowed women to see but not to be seen.

Thus male space, the men's salon *(mandara),* was transformed into social space when the women occupied the gallery above it to observe the entertainment below—the singers, dancers, and poets who were brought to the house to entertain the occupants, particularly on holidays such as the opening of the city's main canal or on Ramadan evenings. Like the veil worn outdoors, *mashrabiyya* indoors allowed unrelated men and women to be in proximity to each other while allowing them, at the same time, to practice gender segregation.

In the place of private in the dichotomous public/private concept of space and privilege, *family space* comes closer to defining the values and norms of the period, including modesty, family honor, the virginity of unmarried females, and marital fidelity. Abraham Marcus in his study of privacy in eighteenth-century Aleppo noted, "The preoccupation with the protection of women from improper exposure reinforced the ideal of domestic privacy. The townspeople regarded the indoor activities of the household as private and the home as a protected sanctuary, immune from unlicensed observation and entry."[5]

The Arabic root from which the word *harim* is derived is *harama*, which means to be forbidden or prohibited.[6] The word *haram* means sacred, sanctuary, sacred precinct, and wife.[7] In Ottoman usage, the family quarters of the home were known as the *haramlik*.

Janet Abu-Lughod has explained how the law regulated construction in order to preserve familial privacy:

> Line of sight distance, rather than physical distance, was the object of urban design. Thus, Islamic law regulated the placement of windows, the heights of adjacent buildings and the mutual responsibility of neighbors towards one another so as to guard visual privacy. Architecture assisted this process. Not only the device of *mashrabiyya* (lattice wood) screening but the layout of houses and even of quarters created the strangely asymmetrical reality that women could see men but men could not see women, except those in certain relationships with them.[8]

Nelly Hanna has discovered a seventeenth-century case from Cairo's Bab al-'Ali court concerning a building constructed by Shaykh Ahmed al-Khudari in Darb al-Ahmar. The neighbors complained that the building

5. The women's gallery screened in *mashrabiyya* overhanging the men's indoor salon, the *mandara*, of the Bayt al-Razzaz.

had a window that looked onto a neighbor's house and thus violated the neighbor's private life. Shaykh Ahmed was ordered by the court to wall up his window.[9] Savary, the eighteenth-century French traveler to Cairo, reported that the "Turks" were afraid that the *mu'azzin*s would see their wives when they climbed the minarets to give the call to prayer. Savary claimed the so-called Turks obliged the *mu'azzin*s to close their eyes when giving the call to prayer or, as an even better precaution, choose blind men for the job.[10]

George Ebers in his writings on nineteenth-century Egypt expressed his understanding of what the harem and the house meant to "the Oriental":

> The entry to the rooms of the harem is forbidden, even to the most intimate of (male) friends. Harem or *haram* signifies in its root that which is forbidden, that which one cannot touch, and as I have already remarked, the house is for the Oriental a sanctuary in the true sense of the word. When we hear it said, we Europeans, that the master of the house is in the harem, we imagine ordinarily the contrary of what it is; this phrase signifies only that the man whom we are visiting has retired to the bosom of his family, to that shelter where none of the worries or torments inherent of his business affairs can follow him, where he is able to indulge himself completely and without upset to the sweetness of rest or to the happiness of domestic life . . . This place where the children come bounding in to greet their father, or the husband finds his wives, which is never part of his business worries, is the harem . . . [11]

Because the harem can be described as the family quarters of the elite household does not mean that we can equate the harem with the private sphere and the domain of women in contrast to the public sphere and the domain of men. While private, family life was unfolding in the houses of the Mamluks, so, too, was political life, simultaneously, since the house *(bayt)* was the locus of political and economic power and military force among the Mamluk grandees. This blurred the boundary between public and private as did the influence and sometimes power that women of the harem were able to wield through their property ownership, their acquiescence to marriages arranged for them, their networks of freed women slaves, and their role in legitimizing the succession of men to power. Rather

than clearly defined and demarcated spheres based on the right or denial of access, there was instead a blurring of boundaries and a fluidity in the construction of space that was linked to the movement of women's bodies. The conceptualization of the harem as an island of female space surrounded by male space or as a fixed space of confinement with rigid and impermeable borders or boundaries should be discarded. Rather, the harem should be reimagined as a constructed space whose borders or boundaries were flexible and under certain conditions permeable. The space known as the harem was constructed by the female body as it moved through space inside and outside the house, defining the inviolable by the movement and contours of her body.

The harem should be seen as part of a system of gender segregation that physically separated marriageable men and women both inside and outside the house. Yet, within this system of constraints, society had to find a way to allow women freedom of movement while conforming to social norms. The harem, defined as a space created by the movement of the mistress of the house inside the house and the veiling and cloaking of women's bodies outside the house, allowed women access to the streets and almost the entirety of the home. The harem and the veil are not separate phenomena, but rather they are linked through a gendered system of segregation and seclusion. Both made women socially invisible. Women could and did share space with unrelated men as long as they gave the appearance of invisibility through the veil or through architectural devices in the home such as the *mashrabiyya* screens that allowed them to see but not to be seen. While women could participate in the entertainment taking place below their gallery overlooking the *mandara* (men's salon) because of the architectural device of *mashrabiyya,* there were no architectural devices that permitted men access to spaces occupied by women, even as observers. Outside, the social norms forbade men to approach or talk to veiled women encountered on the street.

Gender, Space, and Power

Because of the close association of the harem with the house, an important first step in deconstructing Orientalist representations of the harem

and harem women is to understand how women inhabited the house and moved through its rooms, how space inside the house was gendered, and how, in short, women and men knew, anticipated, and could avoid forbidden spaces. Unfortunately for the historian, most of the great eighteenth-century houses are no longer standing. The neighborhood of Azbakiyya with its lake and great houses no longer exists as it did two hundred years ago. The palaces were pulled down, the lake transformed into a formal garden, and the whole rebuilt in the nineteenth century as a European city. The center of power in eighteenth-century Cairo where 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and his successors held their *diwan* was not only Europeanized in style but became the favored residential and entertainment center of the city's growing and influential European community. What remains for study are only a few residences whose inclusion on the index of Islamic Monuments sometimes prevents their destruction but not their slow deterioration.

However, even if most of the great houses of the eighteenth century remained standing, the daily lives of the inhabitants of those houses today would not be able to tell us very much about how daily life was lived in those same houses two centuries ago. Domestic architecture is embedded in culture, and one of the aspects of Mamluk culture, its sociopolitical system, has been transformed in the ensuing two hundred years. The household politics of Mamluk Egypt was destroyed by Muhammad 'Ali in the nineteenth century and in its place arose the modern state characterized by the centralization of power and the institutions of government. The position of women, linked as it was to the household-based political system of the period, was also transformed. Thus the allocation of space inside the house, the interactions of its inhabitants, and the routines of daily life would not be the same today as they were during the time of the Mamluk resurgence. So, how will the houses and palaces that remain reveal their secrets to us?

First, we can use the theory and methodology of gender as an analytical tool to understand the norms of segregation and seclusion and how these norms were observed inside the house. Then there are two theories for understanding spatial construction and interpretation: first, the semiotics of space, which treats built forms as texts to be decoded, and second, ideas advanced by geographers of space as dynamic and flexible rather than as static and bounded.[12] Finally, because of laws regulating the inheritance of

property and the existence of the *waqf* institution, buildings leave a paper trail for the historian. Houses can be reconstructed textually and their histories uncovered through *waqfiyyat* (religious endowment deeds), which contain invaluable information about the donor who endowed the house as a religious trust as well as details about the design of the interior and exterior. The challenge for the historian is to match the houses that remain standing, like the Bayt al-Razzaz, with the relevant documents. Scholars of Islamic architecture have found *waqfiyyat* particularly useful in recreating structures that exist now only on paper.

Theorists like Amos Rapoport and Donald Sanders who have taken a semiotic approach to space have argued that culture is embedded in the built form. Rapoport has argued that architecture encloses behavior and that the most important variable in attempting to understand the use of space is culture. As Rapoport has written, "There is an intimate link between culture (as expressed in human behavior) and the built form . . ."[13] However, historians are not ethnographers and cannot observe the behavior of the inhabitants of the eighteenth-century house. So, how do they use the key provided by culture to reveal how domestic space was used? It can be done by regarding domestic architecture as a system of signs to be decoded. Semioticians like Umberto Eco have argued that architecture, like language, can be viewed as set of culturally specific signs. Thus all of the built environment can be treated as a semiotic system in which all aspects of a building communicate information to the observer about the environment, society, and accepted behavior. As Donald Sanders has written, "A basic premise of the semiotic approach to architectural analysis is that architecture, like language, is comprised of a system of signs for the communication of information. As in language, the meaning of this information is transferred by means of a culturally specific set of conventions or codes. Buildings, like writing or speech, can be correctly read or understood only if the coded meanings can be accurately interpreted by the users."[14]

Janet Abu-Lughod in her article on the Islamic city provided specific examples of how space can be analyzed semiotically. She explained how gender segregation was expressed architecturally and spatially by using the example of the typical "bent entrance" to a Cairene house.[15] The bent

entrance was a passageway that took a sharp and unexpected turn as a signal to visitors that the harem courtyard was beyond the gate.

Interpreting the coded meanings of a building or architectural devices like the bent entrance or *mashrabiyya* gives us insight into another dimension of life in an eighteenth-century house, which is the connection between space and power. Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens have explored how symbolic systems were established and maintained through practice, that is, how daily household rituals created and maintained power and social hierarchies.[16] This is especially important in a study of gendered space since gender is defined and understood as the asymmetrical power relations between men and women. As Giddens has written, "Powerful people determine the use, symbolic meaning, and form of domestic space. As a result, the spaces 'loaded with meaning' help to ensure that the powerful remain in power. The people in power made the architectural spaces into mnemonic devices that cue their superior position. These ranked spaces do not determine use, but they do aid the continuation of the pattern of power relations."[17]

While Giddens's analysis can be used to understand the house in terms of power relations between men and women, it can also help us to understand these relations between elite men and other men and between elite women and other women. Power relations were encoded in the neighborhoods and houses in which Mamluks and non-Mamluks lived and also in the hierarchy of neighborhoods within the Mamluk elite itself. In terms of gender relations, the house encoded both the superior position of men and the status and influence of women within the household. For example, only the wealthiest inhabitants of the city could afford a harem for the women of the household. Thus a harem affirmed the power and wealth of its inhabitants, including the women of the household. In addition to the rank and status women had as members of elite households, women had access to most of the house, attesting to the responsibilities of women as household managers and perhaps to their continuous residency in or even ownership of the house. Men with multiple wives and concubines moved among their various houses while women tended to remain in place. In addition, the fighting among Mamluk houses and the flight of the losing side outside of the city meant that women would be left to protect and manage the house

in the absence of their husbands. Although men had a superior power position within the house, the architectonics of the palace or elite house confirms that women had a high degree of autonomy within it.

The Evolution of Mamluk Domestic Architecture

In order to read an elite house like the Bayt al-Razzaz or others from the period, it is necessary to understand the architecture and architectonics that characterize Mamluk domestic architecture, whose features were remarkably consistent from the time of the sultanate through the Mamluk resurgence. In the case of the houses of those the French call *"les grands,"* the Mamluks and also the big merchants and religious notables, much of the furniture was interchangeable. In the men's reception rooms, for example, there would be cushions on the floors and rugs that could be moved around or removed when not in use. In the absence of both occupants and furniture, the only way to determine how the rooms were used is by their form and their location within the house and their relationship to other rooms. For this reason, it is particularly important to trace the evolution of the *qa'a,* which Revault has described as being of "primordial importance which does not diminish until the nineteenth century," and to locate it within the houses that still stand in contemporary Cairo.[18] Locating the *qa'a* is the first step to orienting visitors geographically within the palace. *Qa'a* is an all-purpose term for a salon or room where guests are received and thus has architectural features specific to it. Eventually this term evolved so that it referred only to the women's/family quarters in the home, and the men's quarters, where only male guests were received, became known as the *mandara.* What identifies the *qa'a* to a visitor is first, its interior architecture; second, its decorative elements, and third its location on the ground floor (men's) or the first floor (women's). All of these are vital to identifying the space not only as a *qa'a* but as the women's salon and family quarters of the residence usually found on an upper floor or as the men's salon, the *mandara,* usually on the ground floor and near an outdoor reception area, the *maq'ad.*

Alexandre Lezine's description of the classic Mamluk *qa'a,* which he contends took form at the beginning of the Mamluk period in the late thirteenth century, is two *iwan*s (recesses) facing each other across a covered
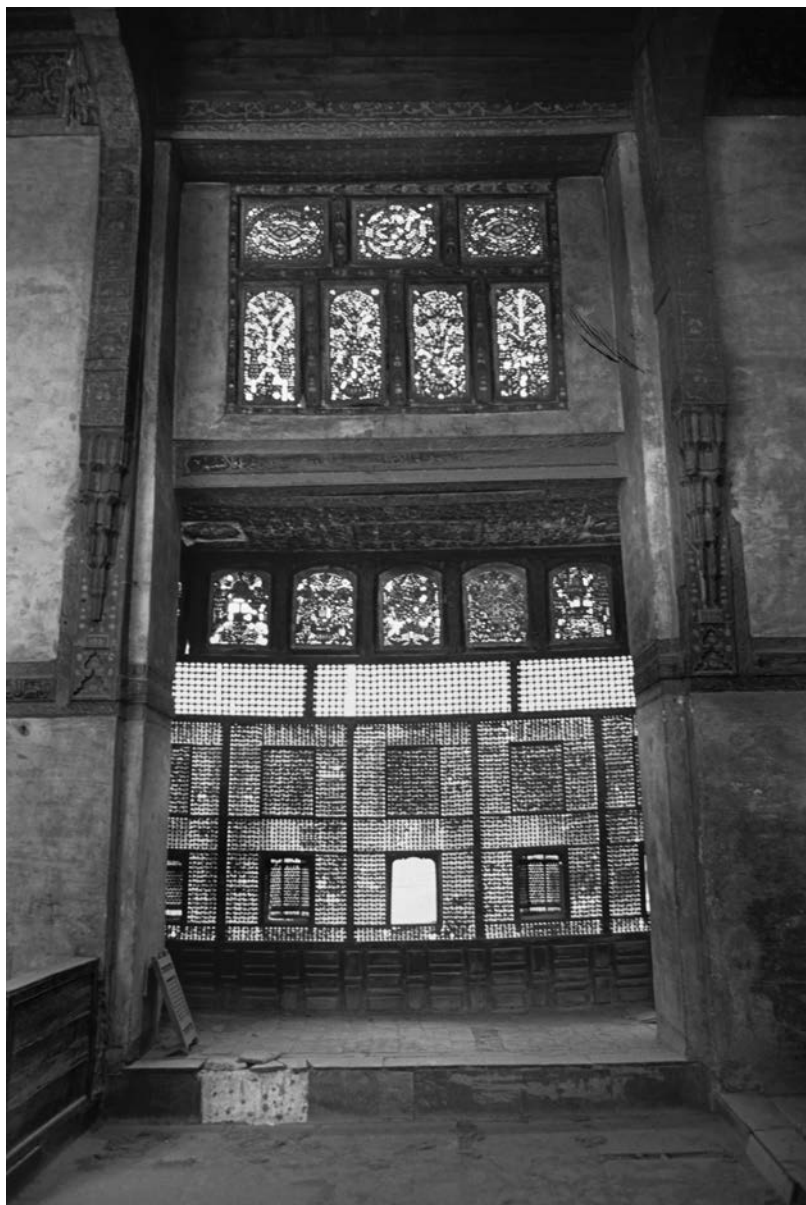
6. The main *qa'a* in the women's/family quarters of the Bayt al-Razzaz show-
ing one of the *iwan*s or recesses.

space called a *durqa'a*.[19] The photo of the main *qa'a* in the Bayt al-Raz-zaz (p. 195) clearly shows the distinctive recess as well as the *mashrabi-yya* screens and windows of colored glass. The architectural elements identify the room as the *qa'a* and the *mashrabiyya* screen as the women's/family quarters.

According to K. A. C. Cresswell, the two essential elements of the *qa'a* are two opposing *iwan*s at the two extremities of the room with the inter-mediary space known as the *durqa'a* separating them.[20]

In the scholarship of Islamic architecture, there is a debate about whether the *qa'a* is Egyptian in origin or whether it came to Egypt from outside. According to Revault and Maury, the indoor *qa'a* had its origins in the outdoor *cour a iwan,* or open courtyard *(cour),* with a recess *(iwan)* at each extremity. They argue that this courtyard with *iwan*s was Meso-potamian in origin and arrived in Egypt with the Arab conquest.[21] They note that the cruciform plan—the open courtyard with four recesses or *iwan*s—can be seen in the house plans of Fustat and was used by the Abba-sid (750–1258 CE) and Tulinid (868–905 CE) governors in their palaces. For the Fatimid period (970–1171 CE), al-Maqrizi gives a description of the Fatimid palace built by the son of Khalifa al-Mu'izz al-'Aziz billah Nizar (975–96 CE) and his sister Sayyidat al-Mulk, which had an enclosed court-yard and four *iwan*s.[22]

On the other hand, Cresswell has argued the opposite, that the *qa'a* was an indigenous Egyptian architectural form from which the later *cour a iwan* evolved. Cresswell dates the appearance of the *qa'a* to the end of the Fatimid period in the twelfth century. He argues that the medieval Cairene *qa'a* and the *madrassa* (school) in the form of a cross with four *iwan*s and a central enclosed courtyard such as that in the mosque-*madrassa* of Sultan Barquq (1382–99 CE) in the eastern cemetery were purely Egyptian in ori-gin.[23] Revault contends that it is not impossible that the two architectural forms, the exterior courtyard with two *iwan*s and the interior *qa'a,* coex-isted in the Fatimid capital, with one evolving from the other.[24]

Although there is some dispute among scholars about the origins of the *qa'a,* there is agreement on how it evolved over time. Lezine argues that the *qa'a* with two opposing *iwan*s of unequal dimensions began to take form in the Ayyubid (1171–1260 CE) period in the palace of Sultan

Salih (1240–49 CE) at the Citadel. During this period, the *qaʿa*s were great audience halls with a very official character. At the same time, there were also great rooms of a more intimate character located in the private apartments. In the fourteenth century, all the great rooms, known as *les grandes salles* or *les salles nobles,* were invariably designated by the name *"qaʿa"* in the inscriptions and the texts, no matter where they were located in the palace.[25]

J. M. Rogers has pointed out that the architecture of the mosque-*madrassa* and of the palace evolved together until the fifteenth century, when dramatic changes took place in domestic architecture. Until that time, the *qaʿa* had the same imposing proportions and form as the mosque-*madrassa* and the same style of decoration, including the use of white and ochre marble known as *ablaq* and the distinctive gilded ceilings. Gaston Wiet has noted that the architecture of the Ayyubid and Bahri Mamluk periods (1250–1382 CE) reflects the military nature of the ruling class as well as its power and ambitions.[26] The sultans, amirs, and *mamluk*s of the period Wiet is describing were medieval warriors who fought against both the Mongols and the Crusaders. Even after the military threats had diminished and the long reign of the Mamluk sultan al-Nasir Muhammad (1293–1341) ushered in a period of relative peace and prosperity, the Crusades had left their mark. The great reception rooms, or *qaʿa*s were constructed inside thick walls, and their elevated proportions recall similar rooms in Norman castles.[27] During the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, domestic architecture conserved the tradition of grand plans and the noble proportions of the rooms, but it also featured an ornamentation of decoration that made the architectural style less rigid and less militaristic.

An outstanding example of Bahri Mamluk architecture is the palace of Amir Bashtak, built between 1337 and 1338 in the old Fatimid City on Shariʿa Muʿizz al-Din. The palace is a fine example of this style of architecture in the monumental proportions of its great hall *(qaʿa),* its resemblance to the mosque-*madrassa*s of this period, the thick stone walls and vaulted ceilings, and the sobriety of its decoration. During this period, the *qaʿa* was an imposing reception room that dominated the residence. Bashtak's *qaʿa* is situated on the ground floor and soars three stories high with great arched entrances to the two opposing *iwan*s.

7. The *qa'a* in the fourteenth-century palace of Bashtak.

As Wiet has noted, the domestic architecture of this period reflected Bahri Mamluk aesthetics and culture with "amirs jealous of their authority and anxious to affirm in the luxury of their residences their high functions at court. The palaces . . . hid behind their walls of stone, reception rooms as high as those of a church (and) numerous quarters sheltering wives and concubines, household retainers, provisions. All concentrated itself toward resisting attack but also to offering a luxurious comfort."[28]

In the fifteenth century, the striking resemblance between the Mamluk mosque-*madrassa* and the *qaʿa* of palaces and great residences disappeared. During the Circassian Mamluk period, the house ceased to be closed in on itself; it opened progressively to the air and light with large and numerous bay windows screened in *mashrabiyya*, which gave onto the street, the interior garden, and the courtyard. The new features of domestic architecture that appeared during this period include *mashrabiyya,* the *maqʿad,* which was a loggia or porch serving as an outdoor reception room overlooking the courtyard where the master of the house received his guests, and the *tahtabush* or portico beneath the *maqʿad*. The term *maqʿad* is also given to the rooms surrounding the loggia, which often included rooms where the master and his guests could sleep.

The innovations of this period are generally dated from the reign of Qaytbay (1468–96) and reflect the changing economic base of Mamluk power, particularly the importance of the East-West trade. According to Revault, "They won honor and fortune henceforth not only by their arms but by their participation in wide-ranging commercial activities and the donation to the capital of prestigious monuments; the riches thus acquired by the one hand served on the other, to embellish Cairo. In these conditions, one is not, therefore, surprised that the evolution of the conception of the Circassian palaces is influenced at once by the greater importance of the local economy and by the new ideas accompanying the commercial exchanges with the countries of the East and the West."[29]

During this period, the *qaʿa* became more humanized, more intimate, and more agreeable, and was associated with the female members of the household. Its ceilings were lowered and it was sumptuously decorated with large *mashrabiyya* bay windows overhanging the street; windows of colored glass; elaborately carved, painted, and gilded wood ceilings; and

colored marble used for decoration. The upper floor *qa'a* became the women's salon and the heart of the family quarters. It was also the most important and most luxurious room in the house.[30]

The men's reception room, usually on the ground floor, retained its more imposing proportions and sober decoration. Also, it remained an interior room closed in on itself with light and air coming from the cupola over the *durqa'a,* the space between the two ends of the room (*iwan*s). The exterior portions of the men's quarters of the house included the *maq'ad* and the *tahtabush,* both of which served as outdoor reception rooms. The *tahtabush* or portico beneath the *maq'ad* was where the master received male visitors of low rank. The *maq'ad*, a loggia or monumental porch with a trilobed arch, was reserved for his high-ranking male guests. Along with the interior reception room, the *mandara,* the *maq'ad* was an essential element of an amir's residence and an expression of his wealth. Because the *maq'ad* was connected to the status and dignity of a Mamluk amir, it also had symbolic value.

8. Window boxes screened in *mashrabiyya* as seen from the *maq'ad*, the men's outdoor reception area at the house of Ibrahim al-Sinnari.

The *maq'ad* was always located at the southwest corner of the palace so that it faced north and overlooked the courtyard and, most importantly, the stables, since the element that above all distinguished the Mamluk amir from his inferiors was his horses. As Revault has noted, "This was a military class and its conception of itself was 'The Mamluks are knights.'"[31]

By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the interior room in the form of the classic Mamluk *qa'a* on the ground floor was reserved for men and eventually became known as the *mandara*. The term *qa'a* became reserved for the large, luxurious room on the upper floor where the mistress of the household received her guests and where the family members gathered. The complex of the *mandara,* the *maq'ad* and *tahtabush* became known as the *salamlik* or the men's quarters. The harem or the women's quarters encompassed the rest of the house. As Edmund Pauty has noted, "The public part of the house is of an architecture quite sober as well as elegant. It is not there that the family gathers but at the interior of the house in the carefully guarded apartments, defended against every indiscretion and more luxuriously decorated."[32]

The House as Text

European men who traveled to Egypt usually devoted a portion of their writings to women and their presumed oppression by religion, law, and the men who purportedly kept them virtual prisoners in their homes. Although not likely to have ever visited an upper-class home or to have been invited into the family quarters of such a home, Europeans wrote about the low status of women in Egyptian society with an assurance and certainty that belied their ignorance. Searching for the historical harem rather than the one imagined by Europeans ultimately leads to the palaces of the Mamluk grandees for material evidence of how upper-class women and men lived inside the great houses of Cairo. Although the grandest of the houses were pulled down when Muhammad 'Ali began the rebuilding of Azbakiyya as the center of a Europeanized Cairo, the houses that are still standing provide opportunities for exploration and discovery. Methodologically, the search for the harem consists primarily in locating, visiting, recording, and photographing the interiors. Theoretically, the project of *finding* the harem

within an eighteenth-century house is based on transforming the house—its architecture and architectonics—into a text that can be read for meaning and using the theoretical tools of geographers, who have linked space to social science, to locate and define the harem as a space.

One of the best preserved examples of Mamluk architecture and one that is of great interest to historians of Islamic art and architecture is the house known as the Bayt al-Razzaz.[33] The house straddles two major thoroughfares, Bab al-Wazir Street on one side and the Suwayqat al-'Izza/Suq al-Silah on the other, in the Tabbana quarter of the city. By the mid-eighteenth century, the surrounding neighborhood between Bab Zuwayla and the Citadel was a lively commercial and artisanal neighborhood but one that was being abandoned by beys, *kashif*s, and high-ranking military officers. The Mamluks at the top of the hierarchy were moving west away from the Citadel to escape the noise and bustle of commerce and industry and to find peace and tranquility first along the lakes, primarily the Birkat al-Fil and then the Birkat al-Azbakiyya. Members of the regiments continued to live in al-Qahira even as it was being deserted by the beys, which no doubt reflects the ties between the military and the popular classes. Although not as grand as the palace of Muhammad Bey al-Alfi, which was commandeered by Napoleon after the French conquest of Cairo, the Bayt al-Razzaz nevertheless allows us to imagine what the houses of the grandees must have been like.

The earliest mention of the house is in the fifteenth-century *waqfiyya* (endowment deed) of the sultan Qayt Bey. In the nineteenth century, there are more documents related to the house including a *waqfiyya,* a series of deeds recorded in the main Cairo court of al-Bab al-'Ali and also in the Qismah al-Askariyya, in which transactions relating to the division of property were recorded.[34] These documents show how property, particularly *waqf* property, circulated among the elite and furnish additional evidence of property ownership and the endowment of *waqf*s by women.

As noted above, the earliest mention of the complex we know as the Bayt al-Razzaz appears in the 1490 *waqfiyya* of the sultan Qayt Bey. Victoria Meinecke-Berg has argued that the original building was probably a *rab'* (tenement) whose income was endowed to the sultan's *waqf*.[35] She believes that the sultan did not construct all of the buildings but acquired already

existing buildings and added some new parts or annexes. In Meinecke-Berg's opinion, the transformation of the building complex into a palace took place in Ottoman times. It was then that the impressive series of residential halls, the *qa'a*s, and the *maq'ad* were added to the medieval structure. Meinecke-Berg has dated the Tabbana section of the complex to 1789.[36]

However, the *waqfiyya* describing the building during the time of Qayt Bey does include a *qa'a* and a *maq'ad* so that the dating of this portion of the Razzaz complex may be a case of rebuilding or restoration. In addition, it raises the question of when the complex of structures we know as the Bayt al-Razzaz became one unified dwelling for one household or indeed if it ever was. This is the assumption of Meinecke-Berg and Jacques Revault, whose essay on the Razzaz palace in *Palais et Maisons du Caire* has been the definitive study of the palace until recently. Revault's work treats the palace as one unified dwelling around two courtyards, the *salamlik* on the Suwayqat al-'Izza/Suq al-Silah (men's) side and the harem on the Bab al-Wazir (women's) side. Revault's work could be revised by the new study of the palace under the auspices of the American Research Center in Egypt's Antiquities Project, which considers the palace as two discrete dwellings.

On the basis of the 1818 *waqfiyya,* it is possible that the complex of structures known today as the Bayt al-Razzaz consisted of two structures, one known as the small *(al-saghir)* and the second known as the big *(al-kabir)*. In this *waqfiyya*, the dwelling owned by the amir Ahmad Agha al-Katkhuda of the 'Azaban and son of the deceased amir Ahmad Agha is the one on the Bab al-Wazir side of the complex. However, the amir is endowing more than this dwelling. The endowment deed described another complex of structures including a *qa'a,* which is possibly the *mandara,* and a *maq'ad* on the Suwayqat al-'Izza/Suq al-Silah side. It does seem on the basis of the *waqfiyya* that this is the first time that the complex of structures on both sides of the blocked alley dividing the two spaces was joined into one unit. However, it should be noted that the unification of the two buildings may be only a textual consolidation for the purposes of the endowment rather than the material consolidation of the two properties. We don't know when or if the two complexes were utilized as one contiguous dwelling unit.

It is significant, I believe, that the Razzaz palace was endowed as a *waqf,* which underlines the important role played by the *waqf* institution

in preserving and maintaining property within the families and households of the elite. Endowing property as *waqf* allowed families to evade the laws of Islamic inheritance that would have fragmented property holdings. In addition, it challenges us to revise older notions of how the *waqf* institution worked. The belief that *waqf* acted as a brake on commercial activity and had negative effects on the premodern economies in Islamic societies should be discarded or at least subjected to much closer scrutiny. In fact, as those who use *waqf* documents in historical research know, the system of religious endowments coexisted with vigorous economic activity. Although a *waqf* and its endowed property were supposed to be endowed in perpetuity, in fact, *waqf* properties were bought and sold legally through a variety of legal mechanisms such as exchange *(istibdal)* and *(isqat)*, dropping a property from a *waqf.* In the case of the Bayt al-Razzaz, the property endowed by the sultan Qayt Bey ended up in the *waqf* of a nineteenth-century military officer through a series of transactions that the Islamic court system deemed to be legal.

The *waqfiyya,* besides shedding light on how this important Islamic institution functioned, also provides evidence of property ownership and *waqf* endowment by women. A portion of the property being endowed by the amir Ahmad Agha was in the *waqf* of a woman identified as 'A'isha, daughter of Mahmud al-Kashif, the governor *(hakim)* of Yemen. Also, the donor stipulated that after his death, the *waqf* should become the property of his wife and former concubine, 'A'isha Qadin Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda. This stipulation indicates one way in which women like the donor's wife were able to accumulate capital. Since the donor made an *ahli* (family *waqf*), he was able to benefit from the income of the *waqf* during his lifetime. Thus, if he predeceased his wife, the income of the *waqf* would go to her.

When a visitor walks through the Razzaz palace today, it is possible to imagine what the house must have been like when it was occupied in the waning days of Mamluk power in Egypt at the turn of the eighteenth century. In spite of its age and a century or so of neglect, an image of the house in its prime can still be conjured from what remains. This is because the glory of Mamluk domestic architecture was in its style and proportions and in the superb quality of its interior decoration. In addition, the dry Cairene climate has been kind to the carved, gilded, and painted wood.

The *mashrabiyya* is remarkably intact as are the marble and the windows of colored glass. Remembering that this was the residence of an officer, a *katkhuda,* at a time when the beys had largely deserted this neighborhood for other more serene and less crowded areas along the *birka*s and west of the canal, we can only speculate on how much more sumptuous and luxurious were the palaces of ʿAli Bey al-Kabir on the western shore of Azbakiyya and Murad Bey in Giza.

Long empty of its occupants, the Razzaz palace can reveal to us how space was gendered by its visual clues or its culturally specific symbols. The harem overlooking the Tabbana quarter and Bab al-Wazir Street is immediately identifiable by the *mashrabiyya* bay windows overhanging the street. An imposing portal marks the main entry to the harem. There is also an entryway through a typical "bent entrance" that signals the approach to the harem with its sharp turn before the entrance to the garden. The entrance passage ends in the garden with a *mashrabiyya* bay projecting over it (see photo 4 in chapter 6).

From the garden, one ascends the staircase to the great *qaʿa* on the upper floor that serves as a salon where the mistress of the house received her female guests and also as the family quarters. The *qaʿa* is in the classic Mamluk style with two *iwan*s (recesses) of unequal length facing each other and a *durqaʿa* in the central section surmounted by a cupola that lets in light and air. The *iwan* at the southern end is the most imposing with its large *mashrabiyya* bay overhanging the street.

The *mashrabiyya* screen is surmounted by circular windows of colored glass. Because of the *mashrabiyya* bay projecting out and over the street, it appears as if the three walls of the *iwan* are one large screen of *mashrabiyya* suspended in the air. The *mashrabiyya* and the colored glass filter the strong Cairene light and soften it, creating shifting patterns of light on the floor and walls. The whole effect is one of softness, luxury, comfort, and intimacy.

The *salamlik* (men's quarters) on this side of the complex with its *maqʿad* and *mandara* (outdoor and indoor reception rooms) no longer exists. So, to view the complex's *salamlik,* one crosses from the courtyard on the Tabbana side to the courtyard on the Suwayqat al-ʿIzza/Suq al-Silah side. The most striking features of this courtyard are its size and the

9. Carved and painted wooden door and lintel on an upper floor of the women's/family quarters of the Bayt al-Razzaz.

10. The *iwan* or recess at the southern end of the Bayt al-Razzaz in the main *qa'a* of the women's/family quarters with a *mashrabiyya* screen surmounted by windows of colored glass, and on the left of the photo a smaller window screened in *mashrabiyya*.

imposing *maq'ad* at the southwest corner, situated so that it can catch the
cool breezes from the north.

The *maq'ad* is in the classic Mamluk style with a trilobed arch and an
elaborately carved and decorated ceiling. From the courtyard, one enters
the indoor, ground-floor reception room *(mandara),* again in the clas-
sic Mamluk style with two opposing *iwan*s of unequal dimension and a
durqa'a in the center with a marble fountain and a cupola above for light
and air, the only source of both in the room.

On the upper floor, overlooking the *mandara,* is the women's gallery
enclosed in *mashrabiyya* screens. The *mandara* is very different from the
great *qa'a* of the *haramlik* in proportion and in overall effect. Its propor-
tions are noble and lofty; the marble is chilly and the decoration somber. It
is closed in upon itself, not open to the street or the courtyard. There are
no *mashrabiyya* bays or colored glass windows to soften the light, which
enters from the open dome above the fountain.

Mashrabiyya was one of the most important visual signals of women's
presence in the house and the areas of the house to which women but not
men had access. Through the use of *mashrabiyya* at strategic locations in
the house, the Bayt al-Razzaz palace demonstrates that women had access
to all parts of the house except the men's indoor salon *(mandara),* the men's
outdoor salon *(maq'ad),* and the ground-level portico *(tahtabush),* which
comprised the *salamlik*. However, women could even penetrate the *salam-
lik* by way of the galleries and bays enclosed in *mashrabiyya* that allowed
women to observe the men without being observed by them. This design
can also be seen in other residences such as the Musafirkhana palace, the
Bayt al-Suhaymi, and the house of Ibrahim al-Sinnari.

Based on these examples, several conclusions can be drawn about the
gendering of space in the eighteenth-century house. First, the harem was
not an enclosed space inside a larger male space. In fact, examples like the
Bayt al-Razzaz demonstrate that the harem, defined as the spaces to which
women had access and unrelated men were not allowed to enter, encom-
passed most of the house. Second, we should not make rigid distinctions
between female and male space but should see these spatial divisions as
flexible, mobile, and on occasion permeable. Thus the *qa'a,* the heart of
the family quarters, only became exclusively female space when a woman
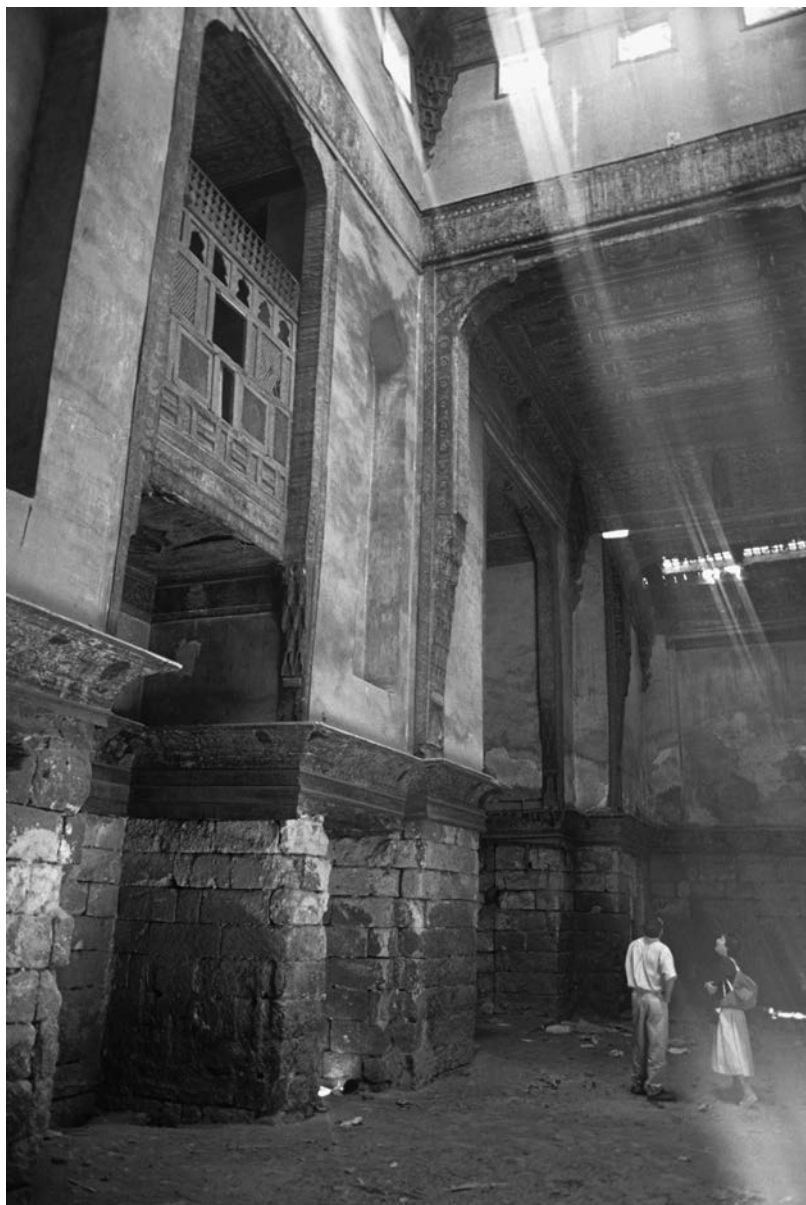
11. The men's salon or *mandara* on the ground floor of the Bayt al-Razzaz showing the overhanging women's gallery and the light streaming into the room from the cupola or *durqa'a* overhead.

12. Window boxes enclosed in *mashrabiyya* overlooking the courtyard at the house of Ibrahim al-Sinnari.

entertained her female friends there and even her husband was prohibited entry. Although male space did not become female space, women gained access to it through the device of *mashrabiyya,* so that she could move about the house and even enjoy the entertainment of singers and dancers in the men's salon from her space above and behind the protective wooden screen. One of the crucial differences between male and female space is that female space was never permeable the way male space was; there are no devices in Islamic society that permitted unrelated men to penetrate female space.

Thus the harem, rather than being a fixed space with rigid boundaries, should be conceptualized as fluid space constructed by the movement of the female body inside the house. What links inside and outside space into a unified system of gender segregation is the movement of women's bodies through space. In other words, the harem is an inscription on a woman's body that creates an area of inviolable space as she moves inside and outside the house. The harem is both an inside and an outside phenomenon created by female bodies rather than a rigidly defined inside space from which women could not escape. While the Orientalist view of the harem is that of a space created by men that women could not leave, in fact it appears to be a space created by the movement of women's bodies that men could not enter.

As noted earlier, the study of gender is inherently the study of asymmetrical power relations between men and women. Therefore we should expect gendered spaces to express these same unequal power relations. While the power relations between Mamluk men and women were asymmetrical, women were not completely oppressed or without power and influence. Using gender analytically forces us to focus on power and how it is produced, reproduced, and maintained. In terms of the eighteenth century, the question is how were the power relations between men and women embedded in the architecture of the house? Since women managed the grand homes of the eighteenth century, they needed access to most of its spaces. The presence of *mashrabiyya* throughout a house like the Bayt al-Razzaz demonstrates female access and thus a degree of power within the household. After all, it was women who could penetrate male spaces such as the men's indoor and outdoor reception areas, the *mandara* and

maq'ad, respectively, even if indirectly, while there were no architectonics that allowed unrelated men access to female spaces. On the other hand, it was clearly women inside and outside the home who bore the burden of gender segregation and family honor.

As for the men of the household, the power and privilege of male Mamluks were embedded in the *maq'ad,* the *mandara,* and the courtyard. It was in this complex of rooms and spaces that the master of the house received his guests, who, as his peers or clients, rode into the courtyard on horseback, a privilege reserved exclusively for Mamluks. The *maq'ad* overlooking the stables provided a continual demonstration of what separated Mamluks from ordinary men and from all women. One of the plates of the *Description de l'Egypte,* the courtyard of 'Uthman Bey's palace, shows a Mamluk alighting from his horse near the steps to the *maq'ad* as a servant held the horse's bridle. Thus the courtyard, dominated by the *maq'ad,* formed a stage for the display of Mamluk prowess and power.

In my opinion, the *maq'ad* is reminiscent of the Palais Bigarre, overlooking the stables and the horse market of Rumayla Square at the foot of the Citadel, where the medieval Mamluk sultans held court surrounded by their amirs and *mamluk*s. After the sultanate fell to Ottoman power in the sixteenth century and became the residence of the Ottoman governor and the barracks for his military entourage, the *maq'ad* allowed the Mamluks to re-create the royal style of the sultanate but on a smaller scale. Thus the *maq'ad* represented the survival of a key Mamluk symbol by a beylicate anxious to reassert Mamluk power in Egypt.

As Michele Rosaldo has pointed out, distance often provides support for male claims to authority: "In many parts of the world, there is a radical break between the life of men—as reflected in their politics, separate sleeping quarters, and rituals—and the life of the domestic group. To the extent that men live apart from women, they of course cannot control them, and women may be able to form informal groups of their own. Yet, men are free to build up rituals of authority that define them as superior, special and apart."[37]

From the perspective of men, the *salamlik* provided them with the maximum amount of distance or separation from their women that it was

possible to achieve within one structure. In gender terms, women's power and influence in the house was expressed through their access and connection to the house while men's greater power and privilege was expressed through their distance and separation.

Conclusion

The importance of the household as both the foundation and expression of Mamluk power would not have been possible without the participation of women and their acquiescence to the sexual arrangements made for them from the moment of their enslavement as concubines to their marriages as ostensibly free women. Mamluk women were not autonomous sexually; rather their sexuality was controlled through a system of gender segregation and female seclusion that made the sexual politics of the Mamluk period possible.

Because the harem is associated with a house or palace in the Western imagination, it is important to situate the harem within an actual structure. The point is not to perpetuate the misconception of the harem as a prison or as an island of female space within a larger male space to which the women of the house did not have access. Rather, the goal is to deconstruct the harem as a rigidly defined space within the house and as a site of bondage and absolute oppression. Using the architecture and architectonics of an eighteenth-century house known as the Bayt al-Razzaz, it is clear that women had access to most of the house either directly or indirectly. This, plus women's appearance outdoors in public places, has led to the conclusion that we should reconceptualize the harem not as a fixed spot with clearly defined borders but as an inscription on a woman's body, which, by its movement through space, created the harem. The harem retains its meaning as inviolable space but returns agency to women through their role in its construction as a space. Thus the harem becomes not so much a space women could not leave but a space men unrelated to her could not enter. Therefore the harem and veiling should not be seen as separate phenomena but as linked practices that upheld a system of gender segregation that served to separate marriageable men and women and to ensure female

purity and family honor. Gender segregation also preserved the right of men to determine the sexual and marital choices of the females under their control. While the harem was not the site of the almost complete oppression of women as Western observers imagined, gender segregation, which included the harem, did serve to reproduce and maintain the asymmetrical power relations between elite men and women.

8

Everyday Life in the Harem

Inside the Harem

Unfortunately for historians of eighteenth-century Egypt, no one comparable to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu visited Cairo, was welcomed by elite women into their homes, or recorded descriptions of them and of the *haramlik* in a series of lively letters to her family and friends in England between 1716 and 1718. Lady Mary did all of this, writing from Istanbul where her husband, Edward Montagu, was the English ambassador to the Sublime Porte. Lady Mary is almost unique among eighteenth-century travelers to the Ottoman Empire because she could describe firsthand what her male counterparts could only imagine or learn indirectly about women and their private lives. Although male travel writers routinely wrote about upper-class women and their harems, they were forbidden to talk with the women if they should meet them by chance on the street and would not be invited into the homes of the elite. Lady Mary, whose views of Turkish women's lives is so different from those of male travel writers of the period, commented on this phenomenon in a letter describing her visit to the baths at Sophia:

> You will perhaps be surprised at an account so different from what you have been entertained with by the common voyage-writers who are very fond of speaking of what they don't know. It must be under a very particular character or on some extraordinary occasion when a Christian is admitted into the house of a man of quality, and their harems are always forbidden ground. Thus, they can only speak of the outside, which makes no great appearance; and the women's apartments are all built backward, removed from sight, and have no prospect than the garden, which are enclosed with very high walls.[1]

Although Lady Mary is perhaps the best-known traveler to the Ottoman Empire in part because of her firsthand account of the harems and the baths, there is another witness to life inside the harem, a man, although not one of "common voyage-writers" of whom Lady Mary wrote so disparagingly. He is Guillaume Antoine Olivier, who was sent to Istanbul as an official emissary of the new republican government of revolutionary France to restore political and commercial relations between France and the Sublime Porte. He left France on November 7, 1792, sailing from the port of Toulon, with a companion identified as "Citoyen Bruguiere," who did not survive the journey. After a six-year sojourn in the East, Olivier wrote a six-volume account of his travels, *Voyage dans L'Empire Othoman, L'Egypte et La Perse*.[2] According to Olivier, a medical doctor, he became friendly with an Ottoman official who asked him to treat his sick mother. As a result, Olivier became, as far as is known, the only eighteenth-century European male to enter an Ottoman harem and to leave a detailed description of the house, the harem, and its occupants, including the harem slaves.

The use of travel literature written by Europeans to understand the lives of Egyptian or Ottoman women, while immensely valuable, is also problematic in several respects, including the Orientalist perspective of the writers and the question of their veracity as well as their accuracy. A separate issue in the case of Lady Mary and Olivier is how much we can extrapolate from their encounters with Ottoman women and apply to Mamluk women during the same period. Both Mamluk and Ottoman societies were slave societies that created their elites through the acquisition and training of slave recruits and whose consorts and wives were slave women acquired through conquest or purchase. Leslie Peirce's account of women in the *haramlik* of the Ottoman sultans also provides a basis of comparison with Mamluk women as well as an awareness of commonalities in the lives of elite early modern women.[3] Also, there is much useful information about Mamluk women from European travelers when it comes from their own observations or from conversations with persons who had access to the harem, such as the female merchant who reported to the Comte de Volney about the harem women to whom she sold cloth.[4] Descriptions of

women appearing at public festivals or visiting the cemeteries on Fridays provide evidence of women's ability to leave their homes for a variety of reasons, including participating in the public life of the city. An additional problem related to the reading of eighteenth-century travel literature about women is, as Lady Mary observed, the tendency of travel writers to recycle observations and descriptions written by others into their own memoirs and travel accounts. This had the effect of repeating inaccuracies of the sort that angered Lady Mary and of making it difficult for more perceptive and empathetic writers to counter the stereotypical depictions of women. An example of how travelers' accounts were recycled by others is the famous essay by Chabrol, one of the 167 savants who accompanied Napoleon Bonaparte on the expedition to Egypt and contributed to the monumental *Description de l'Egypte.* Chabrol's essay, "Essai sur les Moeurs des Habitants Modernes de l'Egypte," described how a physician treated a woman in her harem that bears more than a superficial resemblance to Olivier's visit to the Ottoman official's mother.[5] In this case, the writer, Chabrol, was recycling an incident recorded by a perceptive and quite empathetic traveler, Olivier, who had more knowledge than "the common voyage-writers" whose accounts were belittled by Lady Mary.

While the activities of elite women outside their homes have been vividly described by travelers, women's lives inside the home were not open to scrutiny by outsiders except for a privileged few. Women did not record their life experiences in memoirs or autobiographies and only their legal documents such as the endowment deeds *(waqfiyyat)* provide information about their ties to the husbands, female friends, and children. What we can know from a variety of sources about women's lives in the eighteenth century is that they were involved in managing their homes and their own business and personal affairs, raising their children, entertaining and visiting their friends and families, celebrating occasions such as the birth of a child or a wedding, and participating in festivals such as the opening of the main canal. Some of these activities were conducted inside the home and others required them to leave their homes and venture into the streets as they made their way to the homes of friends or to the cemeteries for their Friday visits to the dead.

Outside the Harem

Chabrol suggested that the freedom of women to leave their homes made it possible for them to have what he called "intrigues" or extramarital liaisons with the help of their slaves. He said, "They will appear to be going to the bath or on a visit but instead have a rendezvous."[6] According to Chabrol, the water carrier *(suqqa')* played a principal role in almost all amorous intrigues, probably as a message carrier between the parties.[7] Lady Mary recognized the possibilities that elite women had for extramarital affairs. However, unlike Chabrol or the male travel writers she accused of inaccuracy, Lady Mary attributed this to the freedom of Ottoman women. Clearly, Lady Mary was an empathetic and perceptive observer of Ottoman life and particularly of women's lives. She had the additional advantage of being a woman and by virtue of her gender and her status as the wife of the English ambassador, she was invited to the homes of Ottoman women, something male Europeans, no matter how high their rank, could not do. But Lady Mary had a particular insight into the way dress could offer Ottoman women mobility, privacy, and the opportunity for dalliances with men not their husbands because she wore what she called her "Turkish habit" when she left her home in Pera, the European quarter of Istanbul.[8] Rather than remain sequestered at home, Lady Mary, dressed like an Ottoman woman, toured the city and visited its famous mosques and markets. Thus she understood firsthand how it felt to be anonymous and unapproachable when wearing the enveloping garments of an Ottoman lady, including the face veil. In a letter to Lady Mar, she described in minute detail what she wore, from her drawers and smock to the long, concealing cloak she called a *"ferigee,"* which was worn when outdoors. She explained to her sister:

> 'Tis very easy to see they have more liberty than we have, no woman of what rank soever [sic] being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head and hangs half-way down her back; and their shapes are wholly concealed by a thing called a *ferigee,* which no woman of any sort appears without. This has strait sleeves that reach to their fingers' ends and it laps all round 'em, not unlike a riding hood. In winter 'tis

of cloth, and in summer, plain stuff or silk. You may guess how effectually this disguises them, that there is no distinguishing the great lady from her slave, and 'tis impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her, and no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street.[9]

Lady Mary was not naïve; she knew that the autonomy and physical mobility of Ottoman women was not due solely to their manner of dress but had an underlying cause, namely, their control of their own wealth, which gave them a degree of independence that women like Lady Mary did not have. When she wrote that "[u]pon the whole, I look upon Turkish women as the only free people in the Empire," she was not referring only to their ability to move freely about the city but more importantly to the fact that rich women had "all their money in their own hands."[10] In another respect also Lady Mary was not naïve. She understood the price a woman could pay if she was discovered in an unsanctioned sexual relationship. She reported the discovery in Pera of the body of a naked woman with two knife wounds who could not be identified "because no woman's face is known." According to Lady Mary, "She was supposed to be brought in dead of night from the Constantinople side and laid there. Very little inquiry was made about the murder and the corpse was privately burned without noise."[11]

While Lady Mary extolled women's mobility and their status as "the only free people of the empire," male travel writers considered veiling and the harem as examples of the extreme oppression of women and did not link the concept of freedom to Oriental women of any class. C. S. Sonnini, for example, described the women of the Mamluks as "perpetually recluse, or going out but seldom, and always with a veil, or, to speak more correctly, with a mask which entirely covers their face . . . And for whom are so many charms thus carefully preserved: For one man alone; for a tyrant who holds them in captivity."[12] Volney had an even harsher view of the society's treatment of women, which he blamed on the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an, claiming incorrectly that they did not do women the honor of treating them as part of the human species. He also asserted incorrectly that the government deprived women of all property and personal liberty,

which he said made them dependent on a husband or father and was tan-
tamount to slavery.[13]

Women did own and manage their property and they did leave their
homes for a variety of reasons, which even male observers noticed and
described in their travel writings. Clearly, socializing with other women
was an important aspect of women's lives and the baths were as impor-
tant to the social life of women as the coffeehouse was to men, as Lady
Mary noted so perceptively. Women went to the baths in the city or, if they
were wealthy, they had baths in their homes that they shared with their
female friends and family members. The Musafirkhana palace had a well-
appointed bath near the women's salon, which no doubt was used not only
by the mistress of the house but also by her friends and family. Lady Mary,
who traveled overland with her husband to Istanbul, wrote a vivid descrip-
tion of her visit to a public bath at Sophia on April 1, 1717. At the end of her
letter to an unnamed correspondent, Lady Mary wrote, "Adieu madam. I
am sure that I have now entertained you with an account of such a sight as
you never saw in your life and what no book of travels could inform you
of. 'Tis no less than death for a man to be found in one of these places."[14]

Traveling in a Turkish coach, she went to the bath at 10 a.m. by which
time it was already full of women. In her letter she said,

> It is built of stone in the shape of a dome with no windows but in the
> roof, which gives light enough. There was [*sic*] five of these domes joined
> together, the outmost being less than the rest and serving only as a hall
> where the porteress stood at the door. Ladies of quality generally give
> this woman the value of a crown or ten shillings, and I did not forget that
> ceremony. The next room is a very large one, paved with marble and all
> round it raised two sofas of marble, one above another. There were four
> fountains of cold water in this room, falling first into marble basins and
> then running on the floor in little channels made for that purpose, which
> carried the streams into the next room, something less than this, with
> the same sort of marble sofas, but so hot with steams of sulphur proceed-
> ing from the baths joining to it, 'twas impossible to stay there with one's
> clothes on. The two other domes were the hot baths, one of which had
> cocks of cold water turning into it to temper it to what degree of warmth
> the bathers have a mind to.[15]

After providing details of the bath itself, Lady Mary then described the women, what they did and how they amused themselves for the four or five hours that they remained in the baths, which they visited once a week:

> The first sofas were covered with cushions and rich carpets, on which sat the ladies, and on the second their slaves behind 'em, but without any distinction of rank by dress, all being in the state of nature, that is in plain English, stark naked, without any beauty or defect concealed, yet there was not the least wanton smile or immodest gesture amongst 'em . . . some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet, and many negligently lying on their cushions while their slaves (generally pretty girls of seventeen or eighteen) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty manners. In short, 'tis the women's coffeehouse, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented, etc.[16]

Lady Mary finished her description of her time in the bath with an account of an instance of cross-cultural misunderstanding that provides one of the few insights into the way in which Eastern women viewed European women and their relationship with their husbands:

> The lady that seemed the most considerable amongst them entreated me to sit by her and would fain have undressed me for the bath. I excused myself with some difficulty, being all so earnest in persuading me. I was at last forced to open my skirt and show them all my stays, which satisfied 'em very well, for I saw they believed I was so locked up in that machine that it was not in my own power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband.[17]

Visiting the Harem and Receiving Guests

At home, according to Savary, women did embroidery and for amusement they sang and danced and played instruments, sometimes with their slaves. They also invited the dancers known as *'alma* to entertain them. Besides routine visits to socialize with family and friends, women visited each other after the birth of a child, a very important and highly ritualized occasion. Savary described the way guests were received in the harem, which is similar

to his description of what occurred in the men's quarters and is also similar to Lady Mary's description of her visit to Ottoman women of high rank. According to Savary, the mistress of the house would rise to greet her guest and embrace her. A slave would take her cloak and the guest would take off her veil and outer garment. Slaves would bring coffee, sorbets, sweets, and a large plate of melons, bananas, pomegranates, and oranges. Slaves would also bring a pitcher of rosewater and a silver plate for hand washing. Aloe wood was burned to perfume the room. After eating, the slaves would dance, sometimes joined by the women.[18]

Chabrol, who devoted many pages of his essay to women, including detailed descriptions of their clothing and even their shoes, their life in the harem, their duties and entertainment, and their relations with their husbands, described the ritual visit upon the birth of a child: "The seventh day after the birth of a child, there is a great feast in the family. All the women who had been slaves of the mother come to visit her. They are received in the main salon, served coffee and sorbets; after a quarter of an hour, the mistress appears; all approach her and are allowed the honor of kissing her hand."[19]

One facet among many others of harem women's lives that is obscure is childbirth and the raising of children. When the Mamluks are studied in political terms, the focus is on their use of slavery to reproduce their numbers and the fact that in general only the previously enslaved could attain positions in the Mamluk hierarchy. Although women in their religious endowment documents list their female and male children, without naming or enumerating them, among the heirs to the income of the endowment, we don't know if they had children or how many. Chabrol addressed this issue in his essay when he wrote that "[d]eath exercises its ravages above all on the children of foreign families. The Mamluks, the Greeks, the Ottomans, the Europeans and the other individuals who are not indigenous, often die without heirs when they marry among themselves."[20] It is not clear from Chabrol's account if the children die as infants or as young children or if the Mamluks and other non-Egyptians are unable to reproduce. However, he did leave a list of Mamluks who were childless, whose children had died, or who had living children, which he called "the actual state of Mamluk families."[21] Among the beys, Isma'il Bey had one living daughter, and Ibrahim

Bey had two children, of whom one was a son, Mahruq Bey, who had one living daughter. Murad Bey and Alfi Bey were among nineteen beys who had no children. Qaid Agha fathered eleven children among whom four survived, and 'Ali Bey Katkhuda and Sulayman Bey each had one living daughter. Hasan Kashif had one child who was blind and Mahmud Agha fathered twenty-two infants of whom only one survived and was in poor health. Although Chabrol attributes the state of reproduction among the Mamluks to the climate, "which rejects the seeds of a foreign race," scholars of African slavery have noted that slave populations generally did not reproduce in the same numbers as free persons.[22]

The deaths of children among the Mamluks make all the more poignant Chabrol's description of the Friday visits of women and their families to the cemeteries and the family tombs. The tombs belonging to the wealthy were like small mosques in which family members were interred with their slaves and servants. Chabrol described the large crowd of people spread across the plains with family groups sitting under the acacias and sycamores, spending the day clustered around the tombs and mourning their dead.[23]

Lady Mary described in separate letters her visits to the homes of the wife of the grand vizier Arnand Halil Pasha and to Princess Fatima, the eldest daughter of the sultan, widow of the former vizier, Ali Pasha, and wife of the sultan's second in command (*kahya* in Ottoman Turkish; *katkhuda* in Arabic), Ibrahim Pasha. Accompanied by a ladies maid and an interpreter, Lady Mary was met at the door of her coach by a black eunuch and conducted to the women's quarters where she was greeted by the wife of the grand vizier and introduced to her friends. Dinner was a succession of dishes that concluded with coffee and perfumes. Finally, two kneeling slaves waved an incense burner over Lady Mary's hair, clothes, and handkerchief. After this ceremony, Lady Mary's hostess commanded her slaves to play their instruments and to dance, after which Lady Mary left.[24] Savary's account of a typical evening in the men's quarters in Cairo is very similar to what Lady Mary described much earlier about the dining in the women's quarters of the grand vizier's house in Istanbul. Seating was according to rank; slaves brought the various dishes that made up the meal as well as the perfumes that scented the air. At the end of the meal, a slave holding a silver plate on which incense burned approached each guest in

turn and perfumed his beard. They also poured rosewater over the heads and hands of the guests. After this ceremony, the guests departed.[25]

Savary's account of dining in the men's quarters in Cairo and Lady Mary's descriptions of being received by high-ranking women in Istanbul have several things in common: The rooms are similarly described as having sofas along the walls of the room where the highest-ranking guests and equals of the host or hostess are seated while those of lesser rank sit on pillows beneath them. Lady Mary, when she visited the former sultana, Hafise, widow of the deceased Sultan Mustafa, was aware that the sultana's entrance was managed to impress Lady Mary with her rank. Lady Mary explained that she was led into a large room, "where I was desired to repose till the Sultana appeared, who had contrived this manner of reception to avoid rising up at my entrance, though she made an inclination of her head when I rose up to her."[26] On the other hand, the wife of the grand vizier, who lived modestly and without grand displays of wealth, was seated on a sofa when Lady Mary arrived, but she arose and advanced toward Lady Mary to greet her and introduce her to her friends "with great civility."[27]

The room in Princess Fatima's house where she received her guests was more imposing and opulent with painted and gilded walls and a marble fountain at one end of the room. Fatima, who impressed Lady Mary with her beauty and good manners, was seated on a sofa covered with fine Persian carpets. She rose when Lady Mary entered and greeted her by "saluting me after their fashion, putting her hand upon her heart with a sweetness full of majesty that no court breeding could ever give."[28] Lady Mary was not asked, however, to share the Princess's sofa, but was given cushions to sit on, although in the corner, the place of honor. The princess charmed Lady Mary by calling her "Guzel Sultanum," beautiful sultana, and giving her a silver basket of embroidered handkerchiefs, begging her to wear the richest and give the others to her maid and interpreter.

In these hierarchical societies ranked and ordered in terms of proximity to the Ottoman sultan or the most powerful Mamluk bey, the rank and wealth of the master or mistress of the house was expressed in the dimensions of the room and the richness of its decoration, such as pillows and wall hangings of velvet, satin, and silk; plates of gold and silver and teacups of fine porcelain; the number of slaves attending the master or

mistress and waiting on the guests; and the number and quality of dishes served. For women, another symbol of rank and wealth was the clothing and jewels worn by the women. Lady Mary was impressed by the garments and jewelry worn by Hafise, whose worth she estimated in a letter to her sister, Lady Mar, dated March 10, 1718, as 100,000 pounds sterling. Lady Mary's discerning eye described Fatima wearing large loops of diamonds fastened to pearl buttons; tassels of pearls and diamonds; diamond brooches; a belt covered with diamonds; chains around her neck ending at her knees, one with an emerald as big as a turkey egg at the bottom; pear-shaped diamond earrings as large as hazel nuts; four strings of pearls, "the whitest and most perfect in the world," fastened with a ruby surrounded by twenty diamonds; a headdress covered with emeralds and diamonds; large diamond bracelets on her arms; and five single diamond rings on her fingers. As a clearly impressed Lady Mary wrote to her sister, "no European queen has half the quantity, and the Empress's jewels (though very fine) would look very mean near hers."[29]

The harem was the family quarters of the home, where a husband, his wife, and children could enjoy each other's company. Since it was also the location of the salon where a woman entertained her friends, her husband entered only after being assured, probably by one of the harem eunuchs, that there were no unrelated females in the room. The mistress of the household raised her children there, sons until puberty when they moved to the men's quarters, the *salamlik*. Although women did leave their homes to participate in the festivities that marked public and religious holidays, they also celebrated at home with their husbands and children. During Ramadan, for example, women would invite female dancers and musicians to entertain the family after the *iftar,* the breaking of the daylong fast. Chabrol described the scene inside the harem, the husband "seated nonchalantly on his divan, his pipe in his mouth, his favorite wife at his side."[30] While it is unclear how Chabrol would have such details as these, we do know from a variety of sources that both men and women had entertainers in their homes. While only husbands and other close male relatives could be entertained in the harem, women could participate in the entertainment in the men's quarters while preserving the segregation of the sexes and without being seen. In the Bayt al-Razzaz, as described in chapter 7, the

second-floor gallery above the salon in the men's quarters was enclosed in *mashrabiyya,* indicating that it was for use by the women of the household where they could see and hear the entertainment below without being observed by the men.

The men with the most access to the women's quarters were the eunuchs. On her visits to the homes of women like Princess Fatima and the wife of the grand vizier, Lady Mary remarked on being met by a eunuch at the entrance to the home and by one or more at the entrance to the women's quarters. The access of eunuchs to the women's apartments was even greater than the master's since he could not enter the harem when she was entertaining friends. According to Chabrol, eunuchs customarily occupied an apartment on the ground floor of the house and served as the means of communication between the mistress and the master of the household. The only other men allowed access to the harem were the doctor and the mistress's secretary that, according to Chabrol, women of rank ordinarily employed.[31] The secretary remained in a room next to the woman's apartments and communicated with her through an open door. The doctor was permitted to see his patient in the presence of her female slaves and the eunuchs, and she never removed her veil.

A firsthand account of a doctor's treatment of a woman in the harem is that given by Olivier, who examined the sick mother of an Ottoman official with whom he had become friendly. The official, who had begun to lose faith in his mother's Greek doctor, asked Olivier to examine her and then to consult with the Greek physician on the appropriate treatment. Olivier agreed, confessing that he had long wanted to see a Turkish household and the inside of a harem in order to understand its layout and observe the customs established there.[32] Accompanied by the woman's son and the doctor, Olivier described being taken to a large room encircled on three sides by a sofa. The floor was covered by several small Persian rugs and a fine Egyptian mat. The sick woman was in the middle of the room on a light mattress. She wore a white veil of *mousseline* (gauzy silk cloth) and was attended by two young female slaves. The other women were behind a grille that separated the two rooms and a curtain that hid them from view. After they left, the Greek doctor told Olivier that the harem of this man

was composed of some thirty to forty Georgian and Circassian slaves who were there to serve his wife, a young princess to whom the official owed "his credit and his fortune."[33] It is likely that Olivier's account became the basis for Chabrol's later description of how a doctor examines a woman in the harem.

From the harem, women managed the household, which could sometimes be the size of a small hotel. As noted previously, a Mamluk bey or "grand seigneur" of Cairo could have a household of 150–200 persons, which meant he needed the revenue to support it and a residence large enough for his *mamluk*s and followers to assemble in times of trouble.[34] The house also needed competent and efficient management, which was the task of the mistress of the house. According to Chabrol, women employed a staff to assist in the running of the household that paralleled the organization of the *bayt* of a bey or an amir. The position of treasurer was the most important post, and it was occupied by the highest-ranking freed slave. Next in rank and importance was the concierge, followed by the inspector of the kitchens, both of whom were freed slaves. A freeborn woman was employed as a steward or a *charge d'affaires*.

Both Lady Mary and Chabrol agreed that elite women—Ottoman and Mamluk—did not engage in much purposeful activity and that they spent their lives amusing themselves, buying clothes and jewels, and embroidering. Chabrol said that life in the harem was monotonous and that the women spent all their time reclining on soft pillows, attended by their slaves. To this idleness and inactivity, Chabrol attributed the fleshiness or *embonpoint* that he said characterized these women and for which they were greatly admired.[35]

In this regard, Lady Mary was less perceptive than usual, perhaps because she met women like Sultana Hafise only on social occasions. Considering that Ottoman and Mamluk women might own considerable income-producing property, might also be the *nazira* (overseer) of their own or others' *waqf*s, managed households the size of small hotels, and directed a group of household staff and servants as well as had social obligations in connection with her family and patronage network, it would seem that harem women would have been very active indeed. It is probable that the

life Lady Mary led in England was not very different from the life of a Mamluk woman in Cairo or an Ottoman woman in Istanbul. In England, Lady Mary lived much of the time at their home in the countryside near York, which she managed during her husband's frequent and prolonged absences in London. She also was in charge of caring for their children. In a letter to Alexander Pope, she contrasted the a typical week in Istanbul with one in London, where she was a regular visitor when her husband was in Parliament: "Monday at the drawing room (at St. James's Palace), Tuesday at Lady Mohun's, Wednesday the opera, Thursday the play, Friday Mrs. Chetwynd's, etc., a perpetual round of hearing the same scandal and seeing the same scandals acted over and over."[36]

Conclusion

Historians can use various sources to uncover aspects of women's daily lives. The reports of travelers and visitors contain useful information, particularly if like Lady Mary or Dr. Olivier they were invited into the harem and could write with firsthand knowledge about what they observed. However, the most difficult layer of privacy to penetrate is the one guarding the affective and emotional life of women and the family. At this stage, information about the relationships between members of the household remains largely inaccessible to the researcher. There are many mundane questions that we cannot yet answer: Did the mistress and master of the house take their meals together? Did they sleep in the same room or did they retire to separate rooms in different parts of the house? According to Chabrol, men and women did not dine with each other and they slept in separate apartments.[37] Moving from the mundane to the emotional, we can wonder if Mamluk marriages were not only political unions but affectionate ones as well. And, were the ties between a master or mistress and their slaves and freedmen merely links that served the interests of power or were there also bonds of friendship and affection? We know that the Mamluk system was in fact a fictive kinship system. Is it possible that if a man called his *khushdash* his "brother" (*akh*) or his *mamluk* his "son" (*walad*), he was expressing not only the hierarchy of the Mamluk system but also the ties of affection normally associated with these relationships? We also know from

the *waqfiyyat* that men and women routinely named their male and female freed slaves as beneficiaries of the endowments along with their spouses and children and other relatives. However, we have only a smattering of details about the emotional component of the links that bound men and women together inside the Mamluk home.

Gender, History, and the Harem

9

Changing the Subject

Gender and the History of the Mamluk Revival

History without Gender

It would not be outlandish to call Nafisa al-Bayda, the wife of ʻAli Bey al-Kabir and the widow of Murad Bey, the last Mamluk. Murad Bey and his partner, Ibrahim Bey, led the opposition to the French, who invaded the country in 1798, from their headquarters in Upper Egypt. After three years of resistance, Murad agreed to throw in his lot with the French, who were under siege by British and Ottoman forces, in a rapprochement brokered by his wife, Nafisa, with General Kléber. On his way to Cairo upon the invitation of the French, Murad died, reportedly of the plague.[1] Nafisa outlived not only her master, ʻAli Bey al-Kabir, whose concubine and wife she had been, but also her husband Murad. Her husband's ally, Ibrahim Bey, fled to the Sudan and died at Dongola in 1816, the same year as Nafisa. During her long and eventful life, Nafisa had been a part of the Mamluk revival, a political player during the French occupation of 1798–1801, and a witness to the beginning of Egypt's transformation in the nineteenth century into a centralized bureaucratic state under the ambitious pasha Muhammad ʻAli. Although she reportedly died in poverty, Nafisa did not disappear into obscurity. Al-Jabarti wrote about her; she is mentioned repeatedly in the letters of the French General Kléber and in the reports of various French officials.[2] Besides the written records, she also left a legacy in stone, the *sabil-kuttab* (fountain and Qur'anic school) and a *wakala* near the Bab Zuwayla gate that still stand today.

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If we take Nafisa as the end point of the Mamluk era, we can trace a genealogy of Mamluk women back to the time of Hasan Katkhuda and the beginnings of the Qazdughli household. Besides Nafisa, there were two other women who with her dominated about seventy years of Mamluk history, from the 1730s to 1801 (see table 6). One was Amina, the wife of three of the key figures in the rise of the Qazdughli household: Hasan Katkhuda, ‘Uthman Katkhuda, and Sulayman Jawish. The second was Shawikar, who as a concubine had a sexual relationship with Amina’s second husband, ‘Uthman Katkhuda, who was killed in 1736. Shawikar, after a brief liaison with one of ‘Uthman’s freedmen, married Ibrahim Katkhuda, the architect of Qazdughli dominance. The third is Nafisa, the concubine of ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir, who was the favorite *mamluk* of Ibrahim Katkhuda. Eventually she married Murad Bey, the favorite *mamluk* of Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, and lived to see the end of Mamluk power in Egypt. However, the story is not usually told from the perspective of Mamluk women. The historical narrative usually follows the exploits of the men responsible for the ascendancy of the Qazdughli household and the dominance of the beylicate over the military. The story is usually told like this:

The founder of the Qazdughli *bayt* was Mustafa Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (d. 1704), who was originally a *sarraj* or freeborn armed retainer in the entourage of Hasan Agha Bulfiya al-Faqari, who promoted him until he rose to the rank of *katkhuda* of the Mustahfizan, as the Janissaries were known in Egypt (see table 6)[3] Mustafa Katkhuda had two favorite *mamluk*s, Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli and Sulayman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (c. 1736),[4] whom we can describe as the first generation of Qazdughlis after the founding ancestor, Mustafa Katkhuda (d. 1704). Their *mamluk*s, the second generation of Qazdughlis, included the men who would play a large role in the construction of the Qazdughli household and the expansion of its power: Ibrahim Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (d. 1754), the *mamluk* of Sulayman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, and the *mamluk*s of Hasan Katkhuda—‘Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (d. 1736) and Sulayman Jawish (c. 1765)—and Hasan Katkhuda’s biological son, ‘Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda (d. 1776).

In 1736, the Ottoman governor, Bakir Pasha, in a move against the Mamluks, abetted a massacre that took the life of eleven amirs including

Table 6

Genealogy of the Qazdughli Household

Mustafa Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (d. 1704)

Sulayman Katkhuda   Hasan Katkhuda + Amina = 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda

Ibrahim Katkhuda   'Uthman Katkhuda   Sulayman Gawish

+Shawikar   +Amina   +Amina

+?al-Barudi   *Shawikar

'Ali Bey al-Kabir + Nafisa al-Bayda

Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab

Murad Bey + Nafisa al-Bayda
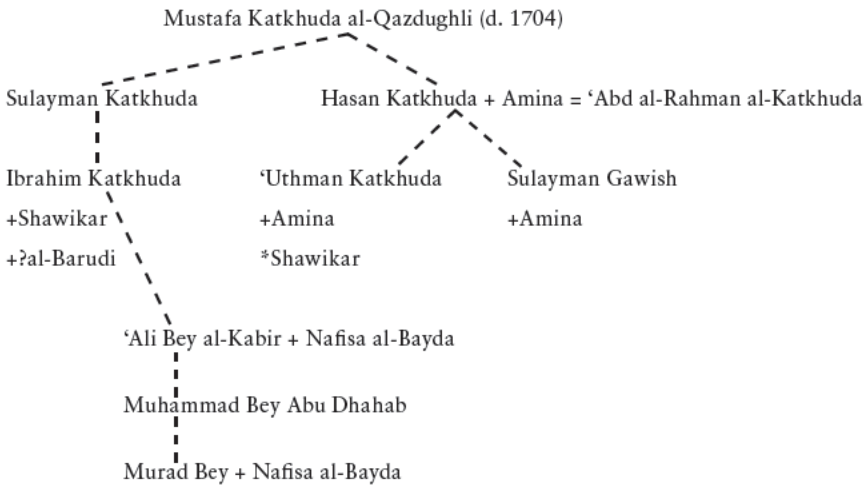
Summary: Mustafa Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (d. 1703) was the founder of the Qazdughli household. His two favorite *mamluk*s were Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli (d. after 1732) and Sulayman Katkhuda. Hasan Katkhuda married Amina, the daughter of Hasan Gurgabi, who gave birth to 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda. Their son married Ammatulla al-Bayda. Sulayman Katkhuda's favorite *mamluk* was Ibrahim Katkhuda, who was the architect of the Qazdughli rise to dominance. Hasan Katkhuda's favorite *mamluk*s were 'Uthman Katkhuda and Sulayman Gawish. 'Uthman Katkhuda's favorite concubine was Shawikar. After the death of Hasan Katkhuda, 'Uthman married Amina. However, 'Uthman was killed in the massacre of the Mamluks in 1736. After his death, Amina married her father's other favorite *mamluk,* Sulayman Gawish (d. 1765). In the meantime, 'Uthman's freedman, Sulayman Jukhdar, deprived 'Uthman's rightful heir, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda, of his inheritance and also married Shawikar. Sulayman Jukhdar died in 1739 when he was acting as sirdar (commander) of the pilgrimage. Sulayman Gawish stepped in and named 'Abd al-Rahman (d. 1776) the rightful heir, thereby restoring his inheritance. Ibrahim Katkhuda married Shawikar and also a daughter of the Barudi family. Power within the Qazdughli household passed from Ibrahim to his favorite *mamluk,* 'Ali Bey al-Kabir (d. 1773), and to his *mamluk* Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab (d. 1775) and then to Murad Bey (d. 1801), who married 'Ali Bey's favorite concubine and wife, Nafisa al-Bayda.

    Key: Dotted line means slave, either female concubine or male *mamluk*.

       Solid line means biological relationship, i.e., son or daughter.

       + means marriage

       * means concubinage

'Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, the dominant Qazdughli amir.[5] Leadership of the household eventually passed to Ibrahim Katkhuda, who became head of the Janissaries and the architect of Qazdughli dominance. Ibrahim Katkhuda, who ruled with his ally, Ridwan Katkhuda, head of the Azaban, expanded Qazdughli power by placing his *mamluk*s in the beylicate, a maneuver that eventually would make service in the military corps (*ojaq*s) and positions in the beylicate dual career paths in one system. After his death in 1754, power passed to 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda, who became an avid restorer and builder of Islamic monuments like the *sabil-kuttab* on Bayn al-Qasryn in Cairo. However, the shift in power from the *mamluk*s of Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli to Ibrahim Katkhuda, the *mamluk* of Sulayman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, would not be reversed. The last phase of Mamluk power in Egypt would be dominated by Ibrahim's favorite *mamluk,* 'Ali-Bey al-Kabir, who would achieve the consolidation of power in the Qazdughli household and in one head. He was followed by his *mamluk,* Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, whose untimely death in 1775 led to the uneasy sharing of power among Murad Bey, the *mamluk* of Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, Ibrahim Bey, and Isma'il Bey.

The historical trajectory followed here is one that is familiar to most students of Egyptian history and one that has been told in more detail in chapter 2. It follows the dominant amirs and their exploits as well as the twists and turns of Mamluk politics, the internecine fighting culminating in a civil war in 1711, the massacre of eleven amirs in 1736, 'Ali Bey's purge and assassination of his rivals for power, and the fragile alliance of the triumvirate in the waning decades of the eighteenth century. It also tends to emphasize the instability and factionalism believed to be at the heart of the system.

Gendering History and Revising the Narrative

The above is the story as it is usually told. But what happens if we gender the narrative, shift the focus, ask different questions? Focusing on the genealogy of three pivotal Mamluk women—Amina Khatun, Shawikar Qadin, and Nafisa al-Bayda—lays bare some of the strategies used to create continuity and cohesion within the household and confer legitimacy on its head.

Because the household was bound together by real as well as fictive kinship, we can see how intertwined the women were in the dynamics of its formation and evolution and can expose to view the centrality of family and kinship ties to its cohesion and stability. Multiple dimensions are added to our understanding of Mamluk women and men who are sometimes or predominantly seen as political actors but not as mothers, fathers, siblings, or children. Mamluk marriages are regarded as political affairs, necessary to create the alliances that strengthen ties between men, but they are rarely acknowledged as sexual unions that sometimes produced children who were raised in households that were also homes. Women not only brought with them the property they owned, inherited, or managed when they were incorporated into a household as a wife, they also helped to legitimize their new husband's claim to power. This situation is similar to the role played by the royal women in the Ottoman imperial harem, although it is important to keep in mind the crucial political difference between the household of the Ottoman sovereign and the households of the Mamluks. Nevertheless, the similarities are striking and noteworthy between the *valide sultan*'s role in sanctioning the transfer of sovereignty, particularly when there was a forcible transfer of power, and the comparable role of women in Egypt's Mamluk households.[6]

If revising the narrative by gendering the history is the aim, then a good place to start is with Amina and the massacre of 1736, not with the murdered 'Uthman, or the usurper Sulayman Jukhdar, or the disinherited 'Abd al-Rahman, or even the man who restored the rightful heir, Sulayman Jawish. No, we should begin with Amina, the woman around whom so much of the story revolves and without whom the story might have ended very differently.

Amina, the daughter of Hasan Gurbagi al-Qandaggi (d. 1716), entered the Qazdughli household through her marriage to Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli. Her husband, Hasan, and Sulayman Katkhuda were the two favorite *mamluk*s of Mustafa Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, the founder of the Qazdughli household. Hasan himself had two favorite *mamluk*s, 'Uthman Katkhuda and Sulayman Jawish. Sulayman Katkhuda's favorite *mamluk* was Ibrahim Katkhuda. Amina and Hasan had a son, 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda. After Hasan's death, Amina married one of her deceased husband's favorite

*mamluk*s, 'Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli, and after 'Uthman's murder she married the second of Hasan's former *mamluk*s, Sulayman Jawish.

'Uthman Katkhuda, the most powerful amir of the time, was head of the Mustahfizan, as the Janissaries were known in Egypt. With this marriage, 'Uthman became the stepfather of her son, which he recognized by designating him as his heir. The incident that would thrust Amina into prominence and into the histories of the period was 'Uthman's murder. A request by a *kashif* to be elevated to the rank of *sanjak bey* ultimately led to a murder plot that resulted in the deaths of eleven high-ranking amirs, including 'Uthman Katkhuda. The Ottoman governor at the time, Bakir Pasha, had a hand in the incident as an attempt to curb the power of the Mamluks. The tragic irony is that 'Uthman Katkhuda was in on the plot to kill the three men who were blocking the appointment of his ally, Salih Kashif, to the position. However, it was dark and in the chaos that ensued with the shooting, 'Uthman was shot and killed.[7] The French consul at the time lamented 'Uthman's murder and praised him as "the only man in the kingdom capable of governing."[8] Raymond estimated 'Uthman's fortune as 21.5 million *para*s, which came from East-West trade and grain production in the countryside.[9] He was particularly close to the Sharaybis, the richest merchant family of the time, and walked in the funeral cortege of Qasim Sharaybi in 1734.[10]

'Uthman Katkhuda was also a builder who constructed a mosque in what was then the district of Azbakiyya. He was killed only a year after his complex at Azbakiyya was completed in the 'Abd al-Haqq al-Sunbati quarter close to the residence of an important merchant family, the Bakri's. Although only the mosque remains standing, the complex can be reconstructed textually from the endowment deed *(waqfiyya)* establishing it. In addition to the mosque, the complex included a *sabil-kuttab*, a *rab'* (tenement) for workers and artisans with five living units, a bath *(hammam),* and a waterwheel. 'Uthman's residence was on the *birka* side and consisted of a large two-courtyard house with a *mandara,* the indoor reception room for men; a *maq'ad,* the outdoor reception area for men; and a *qa'a,* the home's primary salon that served as the center of family life and as a reception room for the mistress of the house and her female guests, as well as stables, storerooms, a pavilion facing the water, and five additional

houses.[11] Amina, his wife, was named the administrator and heir of the *waqf* income.[12] Although there was a dispute over her role that required the intervention of the *qadi,* the *waqf* does not seem to have been dismantled. Through her *wakil* (agent), Amina survived the attempt to reduce her role in the *waqf,* so we can presume that Amina inherited the income and administrative duties after 'Uthman's death in 1736.

Amina gave birth to their daughter after 'Uthman's death, but she did not remain a widow for long. Amina married the second of her first husband's former *mamluk*s, Sulayman Gawish, whose household she joined as a wealthy woman in her own right. Sulayman Gawish was 'Uthman's *khushdash,* indicating that they shared the same master and were probably manumitted at the same time. A man's *khushdash* was the equivalent of a brother in the Mamluks' fictive kinship system. In marrying Amina, Sulayman replaced 'Uthman both as husband and as stepfather to her son by Hasan Katkhuda, 'Abd al-Rahman, and to her daughter by 'Uthman.[13]

Twice widowed, Amina would suffer another blow in connection with her son, whom her murdered husband, 'Uthman, had named his heir. In the aftermath of 'Uthman's death, his estate was seized by Sulayman Jukhdar, who was 'Uthman's freedman and a high-ranking member of the Mustahfizan. Al-Jabarti recounts that Sulayman Jukhdar deprived 'Uthman's designated heir, 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda, of his inheritance, which included his post and the tax farms that went with them. In addition to seizing 'Uthman's estate, Sulayman Jukhdar also took his favorite concubine, Shawikar.

According to the chronicler, al-Damurdashi, in 1739, Sulayman Jukhdar was made *sirdar* (commander) of the troops guarding the pilgrimage caravan. Al-Damurdashi records that Sulayman Jukhdar joined the pilgrimage unwillingly because he was ill.[14] He was accompanied by Shawikar, who was described as his wife. When the caravan reached Birkat al-Hagg, Sulayman Jukhdar died. Sulayman Gawish, Amina's husband and stepfather to her son, 'Abd al-Rahman, was with Sulayman Jukhdar when he died. Immediately upon his death, Sulayman Jawish went to the leader of the pilgrimage, the *amir al-haj,* 'Uthman Bey Dhu al-Faqar, and informed him that 'Abd al-Rahman was the rightful heir to the deceased Sulayman Jukhdar. He then turned over to 'Abd al-Rahman the keys, trunks, boxes, and pavilion that were part of the trappings of office and

paid to the Ottoman governor the *hulvan* (inheritance tax) on the tax farms and properties transferred from the deceased to 'Abd al-Rahman. The chronicles report that 'Abd al-Rahman took Shawikar with him. Al-Damurdashi recorded the event in this way: "*wa akhadha al-sitt Shawikar sahibat ma'ahu* (and he took Shawikar who accompanied him)."[15] Thus it seems that 'Abd al-Rahman did not marry *(zawaja)* Shawikar, but rather took her into his household and under his protection.[16]

Within the fictive kinship system constructed by the Mamluks, Amina, as 'Uthman's wife, became the "sister-in-law" of Sulayman Jawish, 'Uthman's *khushdash*/brother. After 'Uthman's murder, she became Sulayman Jawish's wife. Both men through marriage to Amina became stepfathers to her son, 'Abd al-Rahman, the biological son of their former master and patron, Hasan Katkhuda, Amina's first husband. As his stepfather, Sulayman Gawish played a crucial role in restoring 'Abd al-Rahman's inheritance. Would Sulayman Gawish have intervened on 'Abd al-Rahman's behalf if he had not been his stepfather and Amina's husband? With Sulayman Jukhdar dead and Sulayman Gawish on the scene, what prevented him from declaring himself the heir to the deceased's position as head of the Mustahfizan, commander of the pilgrimage forces, and heir to the tax farms and other property that came with the estate? Such a move would have pitted Amina, his wife, against her son and might have ignited a fratricidal war between him and 'Abd al-Rahman. So, when Sulayman intervened to restore 'Abd al-Rahman's inheritance as a "brother" or as his stepfather or as Amina's husband, his actions were not random or accidental. They were the result of the ties of kinship, both real and fictive, that contributed to the household's cohesion and helped to minimize conflict and instability. At the center was Amina, her father's daughter, mother of 'Abd al-Rahman, widow of the man who made her son his heir, and wife to the man would restore her son's lost inheritance.

The example of 'Uthman's death and its aftermath demonstrates how real and fictive kinship ties interlocked within the household and acted as a cohesive force to counterbalance the tendency toward fragmentation and factionalism. What has often been overlooked is the role Mamluk women played in creating and strengthening the ties of kinship and also in legitimizing the victors in the struggle for power. This is similar to the role

played by the women of the Ottoman imperial harem as noted by Peirce, who remarked that royal women, while not directly endowed with sovereignty, were its custodians.[17] According to Peirce, these women came to enjoy a kind of matriarchal authority providing the link between the dynasty's generations and symbolizing its continuity.[18] Both Amina and Shawikar, wife and concubine respectively of 'Uthman Katkhuda, provided legitimacy to the men who followed him in their lives and continuity to the wider Qazdughli household.

A Window on the Household of Hasan Katkhuda

Our insights into the family of Hasan Katkhuda come not only from the various chronicles of the period but also from the endowment deed of another of his wives, who is not as well known to us as Amina. In 1749, a former slave recorded her *waqf* and named herself this way: "'A'isha Khatun Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, *ma'tuqat al-amir al-marhoum* Sulayman Katkhuda mustahfizan al-Qazdughli *wa al-ma'rufa bi zawjat al-amir* Hasan Katkhuda," which translates as 'A'isha Khatun, daughter of Allah, the white, freed slave of the deceased amir Sulayman Katkhuda [of the] Janissaries and the Qazdughli [household] and known as the wife of the amir Hasan Katkhuda.[19] We know that Sulayman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli was the *khushdash*/brother of Hasan Katkhuda, and so we conclude from 'A'isha's name that her master Sulayman gave her as a wife to his "brother" Hasan Katkhuda, which no doubt strengthened the links between the two men.

The witnesses to 'A'isha's *waqf* attest to her importance within the Mamluk hierarchy of the time and also to the power and lineage of her former master, Sulayman Katkhuda, and her husband Hasan Katkhuda. Although Sulayman died before 'A'isha created her *waqf,* he is represented by one of his followers *(tab')*, the amir 'Uthman Bey Ibn 'Abd Allah Mustahfizan. Other witnesses included the amir Qasim Jawish Mustahfizan who was the *tab'* of the amir Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli; Hasan Katkhuda himself; the amir Khalil Jawish Bashjawish Mustahfizan al-Qazdughli; and two shaykhs. The first recording of the *waqf* occurred in 1144/1731, indicating that Hasan Katkhuda was still alive at that time.

Although the *waqf* was not the largest or richest of those endowed by women in the eighteenth century, 'A'isha was still a wealthy woman. Her endowment included a newly constructed *wakala* in the neighborhood of Gamaliyya that included an apartment complex; seven shops in the Suwayqat al-'Izza; around five hundred *feddan*s of agricultural land planted in dates; and five waterwheels. A *feddan* is roughly equivalent to one acre. 'A'isah stipulated that she would be the administrator of her endowment during her lifetime and the beneficiary of its income. After her death, the income would go to her children and her freed slaves until there were no more heirs. At that time, according to 'A'isha's stipulations, the income should go to support the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and one-fourth of the income of the *waqf* was designated to provide for the poor and unfortunate among the Muslims.

The Lady Shawikar

The events of 1736 deprived the Qazdughlis of 'Uthman Katkhuda, their dynamic and forceful leader, and left two men in a position to assume his role: 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda and Ibrahim Katkhuda. When Ibrahim Katkhuda married Shawikar and brought her into his household, he announced his superior position vis-à-vis 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda. In effect, he was assuming the mantle of leadership that had once belonged to the powerful 'Uthman by taking as his wife the woman who had been 'Uthman's favorite concubine. As the wife of Ibrahim Katkhuda, Shawikar stood at a transition point in the history of the Mamluk revival when power shifted from the freedmen of Hasan Katkhuda to the freedman of Sulayman Katkhuda, namely, her husband, Ibrahim Katkhuda, and then to Ibrahim's favorite *mamluk,* 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. As 'Uthman's concubine, she represented a time when the dominant amir, the *shaykh al-balad,* was primus inter pares, the first among equals. As Ibrahim's wife, she witnessed the expansion of Qazdughli power and eventually, under 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, its consolidation in one household under one dominant amir.[20]

We know personal details about Shawikar because of the *waqf* she registered in 1762, eight years after her husband Ibrahim's death.[21] In her endowment deed, Shawikar named herself in the following way: "Al-Sitt

al-Masuna Shawikar Qadin Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda ma'tuqat al-marhum al-Amir 'Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli wa al-ma'rufa bi zawjat al-Marhum al-Amir Ibrahim Katkhuda Ta'ifat Mustahfizan al-Qazdughli." Translated, the name means "The Esteemed Lady Shawikar Qadin daughter of God's servant, the white, freed slave of the deceased amir 'Uthman Katkhuda al-Qazdughli of the Mustahfizan (Janissaries) and known as the wife of the deceased amir Ibrahim Katkhuda of the Mustahfizan."[22]

In the process of naming as exemplified by Mamluk men and women in their religious endowment deeds, it is clear that the names are connected to their lineage within the Mamluk hierarchy and the household to which they belonged. Men identify themselves first according to the posts they held in the Mamluk system and then the household to which they belonged; only rarely do they mention their former slave status and master. Women, on the other hand, name themselves beginning with their title, Qadin or Khatun or, like Shawikar, al-Sitt al-Masuna, and then immediately identified themselves as slaves, Bint 'Abd Allah, who have been freed *(ma'tuqa),* followed by the name and title of the man who freed them with his household affiliation, and finally, the name of their husband or husbands in the case of multiple marriages. It is significant that Shawikar named herself in relation to two men only, her former master, 'Uthman Katkhuda, and her deceased husband, Ibrahim Katkhuda. There is no mention of Sulayman Jukhdar, who seized her after 'Uthman's death and with whom she spent three years. We cannot know for certain why she omitted Sulayman from her name. Women did sometimes identify themselves as *ma'rufa bi,* "known as," which sometimes indicated their last husband if there had been multiple marriages. Or, it could also mean that this was a chapter in her life she preferred to forget, possibly because she was "seized" along with her deceased master's estate and had little to say in the matter. Reports that Sulayman Jukhdar had married Shawikar might also have been erroneous. As 'Uthman's concubine at the time of his death, she was part of his estate, which Sulayman Jukhdar seized. Even if 'Uthman had made a provision to manumit her after his death, Sulayman clearly was not inclined to follow 'Uthman's wishes in anything having to do with his estate and his family. So, it is possible that while she was with Sulayman Jukhdar, she was his concubine and not his wife.

By the time she registered her *waqf,* Shawikar was a wealthy woman. Her *waqf* conforms to the pattern of other family *(ahli)* endowments as we can see from the stipulations she made in her endowment deed. She named herself the beneficiary of her *waqf* during her lifetime, and after her death her children equally and her brothers and sisters until their line was extinguished, and her freed slaves during their lifetimes. The stipulations regarding her children state that they benefitted equally, so that no distinctions were made regarding the gender of the recipients. The stipulation for the freed slaves says, *"baydan wa sawdan bi al-tasawi baynhum"* (white and black equally among them). In addition, Shawikar named herself the administrator *(nazira)* of her *waqf* and stipulated that after her death the post should be held by one of her children and then her grandchildren. After their deaths, according to Shawikar's stipulation, the post should be held by her freed slave Mahbuba Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, The fact that Shawikar named Mahbuba as the administrator of her *waqf* attests to the importance of the household within Mamluk social and political life and the enduring ties between a mistress and her freed slaves. It is also additional evidence that women used *waqf*s to enrich and empower other women and that women, in addition to founding *waqf*s, had administrative authority over them.

As Shawikar's *waqf* demonstrates, by endowing their property as *waqf* women were able to safeguard it from predatory relatives and Mamluks whose traditions called for the confiscation of the property of vanquished amirs when armed conflict broke out among them and for the transfer of property, usually rural and urban tax farms and their houses, from deceased Mamluks to others within the victorious household. Holding property as *waqf* and under the protection of the courts appeared to safeguard the property in most instances. Having a *waqf* or administering the *waqf* of another with a salary attached to the post of *nazira* made women less vulnerable to the vicissitudes of Mamluk life. Women also stipulated in their endowment deeds that they benefit from the income produced by the *waqf* during their lifetime, and they retained the right to manage their property and to pass it on to their designated heirs.

Endowed property did circulate among the elite through various mechanisms such as the exchange *(tabdil)*, changing *(taghyeer)*, addition *(ziyada)*,

and dropping *(isqat)* of properties in an endowment. However, few *waqf*s seem to have been dismantled outright in the eighteenth century.[23] Powerful Mamluks sometimes took control of *waqf* revenues by having a member of the household assigned to the post of *nazir* (administrator), who could then assign income or property to other members of the *bayt*. However, this process required the approval of the court and would be more difficult if the donor or the *nazir* appointed by the donor or the donor's heirs were still alive to contest it.

A note in the margin of the Shawikar *waqf* records Mahbuba, described as the *nazira* of the *waqf,* participating in a legal exchange *(istibdal)* with Muhammad Bey Qa'immaqam of Egypt, undoubtedly Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, of a piece of property in Shawikar's *waqf*. The property in Shawikar's *waqf* that is the subject of the exchange was located on the western shore of the lake at Azbakiyya, the most exclusive residential neighborhood in Cairo during this period. Intriguingly, it is in the same neighborhood as a property listed in the *waqf* of 'Uthman Katkhuda, Shawikar's deceased master. The property is described as located in the neighborhood of Azbakiyya in the alley *(darb)* Shaykh al-Islam Ibn 'Abd al-Haq al-Sanbati, which was the most exclusive quarter of this elite neighborhood. 'Uthman Katkhuda's endowment made his wife, Amina, his heir and after her death, his children and his slaves, of which Shawikar was one as his concubine. As one of many possible heirs, Shawikar would have had rights only to part of the property. She may have acquired it as a legal exchange or the house may not have been part of 'Uthman's complex at all but another dwelling on the shores of the *birka* that a wealthy woman like Shawikar could afford.

Shawikar's *waqf* also provides information about her heirs, who by the time of the transfer of property included twenty-six freed slaves but no children or siblings. As noted previously, Shawikar named herself the beneficiary of her *waqf* during her lifetime and after her death her children equally and her brothers and sisters until their lines were extinguished and then her freed slaves during their lifetimes. In addition, Shawikar named herself the *nazira* of her *waqf* and stipulated that after her death that post should be held by one of her children and then her grandchildren. After their deaths, the post went to the female freed slave Mahbuba Bint 'Abd Allah al-Bayda, who acted on behalf of the beneficiaries at the time of

the property transfer. Since Mahbuba was acting as the administrator of the *waqf* at the time of the property transfer, we must assume either that Shawikar had no children or that any biological children she might have had died with no heirs of their own. Because of Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab's intervention into her *waqf* after her death, when Mahbuba was acting as the administer, Shawikar must have died sometime between 1762, when she made her *waqf,* and 1775, when Muhammad Bey died unexpectedly after two years in power.

According to her endowment deed, Shawikar owned a substantial estate composed of two houses, one of which was located on the lake at Azbakiyya and was apparently the property exchanged between her *waqf* and Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab; cultivated land in Giza and Minufiyya; a number of shops and apartments; a *rab'* (tenement); and shares in a *wakala* and a commercial complex including a *wakala,* a *rab',* and shops. Shawikar's *waqf* shows that in her choice of income-producing urban commercial property and in the value of those assets, she would have ranked in the same category as Cairo's wealthiest merchants, the *tujjar*.[24]

Shawikar was not the only wife of Ibrahim Katkhuda, according to al-Jabarti. He also married the daughter of one of his *mamluk*s, Ahmad Agha al-Barudi, and lived with her in his house at Bab al-Kharq. His wife, who also had a palace in Old Cairo, bore him male and female children. Al-Jabarti claimed that three of Ibrahim's sons, Ibrahim, Ali, and Mustafa, were his friends. In al-Jabarti's necrology of Nafisa al-Bayda, he wrote that only Shawikar was as famous as Sitt Nafisa.[25]

It should be noted that Shawikar registered her *waqf* in the court when she was a widow. Peirce, who discussed the religious endowments of royal Ottoman women and their extensive building programs and acts of charity, has noted a similar pattern among these women. She argues that royal Ottoman women embarked on their public roles as endowers and builders when they were "post-sexual," that is, had ceased childbearing through menopause or widowhood, for example. According to Peirce, "The importance of post-sexuality is clearly demonstrated in the careers of royal concubines. Their public display of political power and wealth (symbolized by their assumption of the privilege of public building) began . . . only after

their sexual role ended, when the sultan ceased to have sexual contact with them or died."[26]

Sitt Nafisa

The only woman among the Mamluks known so far to have played an active and overt political role was Nafisa al-Bayda, concubine and wife of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and wife of Murad Bey. Her political role began before the French invasion when she acted as an intermediary with her husband Murad Bey, when he assumed power after Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab's death. Nothing is known about Nafisa's origins, but since her name was al-Bayda, the white, we can assume she came from Georgia or Circassia. 'Ali Bey built her a palace on the western shore of the *birka* at Azbakiyya in the 'Abd al-Haqq al-Sunbati quarter that also included a waterwheel and a mill. She continued to live there after his death and also, apparently, after her marriage to Murad Bey. During her life as a powerful and wealthy woman, she created an entourage and patronage network of female slaves for whom she arranged marriages to various Mamluks.

Although she is perhaps best known for her political activities during the French occupation of Egypt from 1798 to 1801, she was already known to the French community of merchants for her willingness to intercede with her husband Murad Bey on their behalf when the beys imposed levies on the French merchants. The French consul, Mure, was too weak to stand up to the beys and convince them to decrease the sums demanded.[27] Charles Magallon, a merchant, had served as a consul of France since 1768. He was married to the widow of a Venetian merchant who sold cloth to the most important of the Mamluk women, including Nafisa. Because of this connection, Magallon was exempted from the French government's ban on merchants having their wives with them in Egypt. Mme. Magallon interceded regularly with Nafisa and often obtained a reduction of the levies on the French.[28] In one incident in 1786, Murad Bey made multiple demands for money to the Europeans, including the French, in Alexandria. The European consuls could act only indirectly by requesting through diplomatic channels that their ambassadors in Istanbul intervene with Murad

Bey to reduce or withdraw his demands for additional levies. In the meantime, Mme. Magallon went directly to Nafisa, who brought the Europeans' request to husband Murad Bey, who stopped his demands for more revenue.[29] Another example of the power and influence Nafisa was believed to wield both by the French and the Mamluk beys occurred during the armed expedition of the Ottoman governor, Hasan Pasha, into Egypt in 1786. Believing that the French were responsible for the Ottoman intervention, they asked Nafisa, through Mme. Magallon, to intervene with the French consul to stop the Ottoman expedition. Thus, by the time of the French invasion, French officials would have known of the Lady Nafisa and her interventions on behalf of the French community in Cairo.

When the French entered Cairo in 1798, Nafisa and Murad Bey had been husband and wife for twenty-six years if they married in 1773, after Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab took power upon the defeat and death of his former master, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir. In many ways, they were well matched. Both were rich, independent-minded, and renowned. Nafisa remained in possession of the house 'Ali Bey built for her and also owned other property including houses, gardens, and commercial property including her most famous possessions, a *wakala* with an attached *sabil-kuttab* inside the Bab Zuwayla gate on the old Fatimid High Street that ran from Bab al-Futuh to Bab-Zuwayla. The *sabil-kuttab* was built in 1796 and was attached to the *wakala,* about which there is some dispute. A *wakala* is believed to have been built on that spot by Qadi al-Fadil (d. 1200), who was a counselor and secretary to Salah al-Din.[30] Thus the original construction would have occurred sometime in the eleventh century. Raymond and Wiet describe Nafisa's *wakala* as new construction and quote Ali Mubarak, who named it the *wakalat al-sukkariyya* because of the predominance of sugar merchants in that neighborhood.[31] The name for this area today is still al-Sukkariyya. The new *sabil-kuttab* that Nafisa built was a popular method for the wealthy to provide services to the community. The *sabil* (fountain) at the bottom provided free drinking water and the Qur'anic school on the upper story provided free schooling.

Murad Bey owned several palaces including the most famous one in Giza, which he confiscated from his former ally Isma'il Bey, who sided with Hasan Pasha and the Ottomans during the intervention of 1786. When

Murad and his Mamluk allies defeated Isma'il's forces four years later, Murad confiscated his house in Giza, redecorated and expanded it, built a pier for access to the Nile, and added beautiful gardens planted in trees of various kinds and vines.[32] Vivant Denon, one of the savants who accompanied the French invasion forces to Egypt and a member of the French Institute, learned that Bonaparte was setting out for the Pyramids with an armed escort of two hundred men and decided to join them. In Giza the French, looking for a place to stay, came upon Murad's "pleasure house," and Denon described the gardens planted in sycamores and thick with the scent of oranges and jasmine.[33]

In one respect, the issue of character, Murad and Nafisa did not seem to be well matched, at least according to the descriptions of al-Jabarti in his necrologies of the pair. Murad, although he merited a long essay, was criticized by al-Jabarti for being the major cause of Egypt's ruin and was described as wicked, a tyrant, reckless, conceited, and arrogant.[34] Yet, according to al-Jabarti, Murad liked the company of the *'ulama* and intellectuals in general, was sympathetic to Islam and Muslims, had a wide circle of friends, was generous with gifts, and liked to play chess and to listen to music.[35] Al-Jabarti's description of Nafisa is entirely complimentary: She lived a long time in honor, power, and influence . . . she was a good woman and she was charitable to the poor exemplified by her construction of the new *wakala* and fountain near Bab Zuwayla.[36]

When the French invaded in 1798 and defeated the Mamluks, who retreated to Upper Egypt under Murad's leadership, Nafisa remained steadfastly loyal to her husband while serving as an intermediary between the French and the women the Mamluks left behind as well as between her husband and the French. When the French took Cairo, they proclaimed safe conduct for Mamluk women and told them that they could stay in their houses but would have to turn over to the French the possessions of their husbands, and that in addition they would have to pay to ensure their safety. At this point, according to al-Jabarti, Nafisa came forward to negotiate for the women of her household and the wives of the amirs. The sum agreed to with the French was 120,000 French riyals, which she and the other women raised among themselves. Napoleon admired 'Ali Bey al-Kabir very much so he gave special treatment to Nafisa and allowed her to

keep the portion of her possessions that came from 'Ali Bey.[37] Nafisa intervened again when the French wanted to interview the wife of a member of Murad's entourage, 'Uthman Bey al-Tunburgi, whom they suspected of providing aid to her husband. Soon after Nafisa negotiated with General Kléber the terms of her husband's possible peace with the French, she was asked to intervene on behalf of Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Jawhari, who was imprisoned for refusing to pay a levy of 50,000 French riyals. Nafisa sent a message to her husband, who dispatched a *kashif* in his entourage to intercede with the French, who agreed to lift the penalty.

The French used Nafisa as an intermediary to persuade Murad to come over to the French side. On March 14, 1800, she met with General Kléber, commander in chief of the French army. She clearly was aware of her husband's location and pointed out to Kléber that she had received a message from him that morning. The meeting between the two came at a particularly crucial time for the French. Napoleon had returned to France at the end of 1799, leaving Kléber in charge of the French army. Kléber realized he had little choice but to negotiate a settlement with the British that would allow the French to evacuate their army. However, when the British refused to agree to these terms, Kléber attacked the Ottoman forces outside Cairo and won, although outnumbered six to one, and then put down a revolt against the French in Cairo. Negotiating with Murad would bring Murad's forces to the French side, and there were promises that if the French stayed in Egypt, Murad would become the governor of Upper Egypt, which meant the French would have a friendly force at their back. Nafisa asked for two conditions: first, that any promises made to Murad would be kept secret, and second, that in case Murad's forces were used in combat, he would be compensated generously. Although Nafisa appears to have acquitted herself well in this meeting with Kléber, his notes convey condescension toward her. He wrote, "You will recognize easily on the part of Lady Nafisa the sweetness and the ignorance of *les affaires* that are suitable for a woman, a lot of caution and even a little artifice. The conversation did not have a witness."[38] Kleber's last sentence is intriguing since it means that she met with Kleber alone to ensure maximum secrecy and that reports that she spoke and read French were probably correct.

When Murad died of plague in May 1801, he was buried in Suhag in Upper Egypt, and Nafisa held a mourning session at her home. She erected a tomb for him next to the graves of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and Isma'il Bey at Qarafa cemetery, near the cupola over the tomb of Imam al-Shafi'i, but his remains were never moved there.[39] After Murad's death his forces revolted, but the French assured Nafisa and the wives of the Mamluks that they would be safe and would not be held responsible for their husbands' actions.[40] Shortly before the French evacuated Cairo, General Menou, who became commander in chief of the French army after Kléber's murder by a Syrian student, wrote a letter to the *diwan* that Napoleon had established originally after the invasion. In it he said that he was grieved by the death of Murad and that he had established a pension for his widow, Nafisa Khatun. He ended with the words "Thus, the French government rewards its friends."[41] Al-Jabarti recorded in his necrology of Nafisa that after Murad had made his peace with the French, "who accepted her intercessions without question," they paid Nafisa, 100,000 *para*s.[42]

After the evacuation of the French, Ottoman forces arrived in Cairo under the command of Muhammad 'Ali and exacted retribution on those who had collaborated with the French by levying fines and confiscating property. In 1803 Nafisa was expelled from her home and took refuge in the al-Barudi mansion, where she had a friend, Adela Hanim, the daughter of Ibrahim Katkhuda, the master of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, whose wife Nafisa had been. Ibrahim Katkhuda had married the daughter of Ahmed Agha al-Barudi, Adela's grandfather, so the links between the two families went back many years. No doubt the connection between Nafisa and the Barudi family was forged when as the concubine of 'Ali Bey she was invited to social occasions by the wife of her master's patron. Al-Jabarti recorded that Ibrahim's wife bore him children, so it is likely that Nafisa would be one of the women making ritual visits to the new mother after the birth of each of her children. At that point in Nafisa's life, Ibrahim's wives, including Shawikar and the daughter of al-Barudi, whose name is not recorded, would have been superior in status to Nafisa. In the fictive kinship system created by Mamluk marriages, they would also be related to each other: Ibrahim Katkhuda as Nafisa's father-in-law, and his children by his wife, the daughter

of al-Barudi, as her stepsisters and brothers. Although older than Adela, the link between Nafisa and Adela was undoubtedly strong and lifelong.

Al-Jabarti included a lengthy description of the events of May 21, 1804, when Nafisa, who had apparently returned to her home, was summoned to the Citadel by the pasha, who placed her under house arrest for alleged sedition.[43] The pasha suspected her of conspiring, through her slave Munawwar, to recruit senior army officers to the side of the rebellious Mamluks by offering to pay their salaries. In the exchange between the pasha and Nafisa, the pasha held out a piece of paper that he claimed would prove her slave's guilt. Nafisa demanded to see the paper, stating that she could read, which confirms reports that she was literate in several languages.[44] However, the pasha put the paper back in his pocket. Also, Nafisa showed considerable courage in her audience with the pasha by accusing him of treating her like a criminal and of demeaning his office by his behavior toward her.

It is clear from al-Jabarti's description that Nafisa was not only a woman of renown but one to whom others showed respect and deference. When she arrived at the Citadel accompanied by two women, the pasha rose to greet her. When he ordered her placed under house arrest in the home of a shaykh, several other prominent shaykhs went to the pasha and demanded her release. Eventually the pasha, who did not want to alienate the *qadi*s and shaykhs, proposed that Nafisa be taken to the home of the highest ranking of the shaykhs, Shaykh al-Sadat. Her friend Adela Hanim left her own home and joined her there. With the Mamluks vanquished, a new order taking shape, and the end of the world as they knew it, Nafisa and Adela would join forces a month later to collect the fines the pasha imposed on the wives of the Mamluks while Ottoman soldiers stood at their doors to protect their houses and to hold them and their property hostage until the fines were paid.

Eventually Nafisa would move back to her home in Azbakiyya, and she would continue to be acknowledged as a woman of status. In 1809, four years after Muhammad 'Ali had been appointed the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Nafisa was instructed with other notable women to ride out to Bulaq to greet the pasha's wife. According to al-Jabarti, Nafisa attempted to beg off the occasion, saying that she was ill and could not go out, but her

excuse was not accepted.[45] On the morning of October 16, a crowd of five hundred women on donkeys gathered on the east bank of the Nile to greet the pasha's wife and escort her to Azbakiyya.

From that date, 1809, until her death seven years later, there is silence. Al-Jabarti recorded her passing at her home and her burial not far from Murad's tomb in the Qarafa cemetery near the shrine of Imam al-Shafiʻi. We know that she had no living children at least by her husband because al-Jabarti reported that Murad died without progeny.[46] At the end of his necrology of Nafisa, he recorded that her home was confiscated by the state, which used it as an official residence. Eventually nothing of Azbakiyya as it was known to Nafisa during the time of the Mamluks would remain. The *birka* would be filled in, the splendid palaces reduced to rubble, and on their ruins Muhammad ʻAli would begin construction of a "modern," Western-style city that would become the center of European life in Cairo.

Conclusion

What is striking about the lives of the women discussed in this chapter is how modern they seem, particularly Nafisa al-Bayda. How we define modernity and what makes women modern are, of course, issues that are debatable, particularly in countries like Egypt that were subject to Western intervention and domination and thus to Western ideas of what constituted the modern woman. However, if we use feminist goals for women, as articulated by international and indigenous feminist organizations, as a way to measure women's status, eighteenth-century Egyptian women do not seem to be as oppressed as European observers described them nor does their society appear as backward as depicted. Indeed, they seem to be more advanced in some areas, particularly property rights and legal personhood, than English and American women of the same period.

Although not articulated as a goal, female autonomy was certainly an endpoint of reforms demanded by English and American women when modern feminist movements emerged in the nineteenth century. Abolishing the perpetual guardianship of women in these societies by husbands, brothers, and even sons was certainly the result of the demand by women for the right to own and manage their own wealth and property, which was

eventually granted in the late nineteenth century to married women first. Property rights confer legal personhood on adult women because the right to own and manage wealth and property means they can act autonomously and no longer require the consent of men to make a contract, buy or sell property, or make a will. Demands for voting rights, education, and professional work all contribute to women's physical and economic autonomy.

As the lives of Amina and 'A'isha Khatun, Hasan Katkhuda's wives, as well as the lives of Shawikar and Nafisa demonstrate, women living under Islamic law had property rights that women exercised through the centuries since the emergence of Islam and Islamic law. Women bought and sold property, endowed it as *waqf,* and administered property on behalf of other women as well as men. Their lives also indicate a high level of physical autonomy. Although men were ostensibly the heads of their households, multiple marriages and concubinage meant that men had several residences, and their wives and concubines often lived separately from men in their own homes, which they frequently owned outright, as did Nafisa and probably Shawikar. If Murad Bey, Nafisa's husband, did not cross the Nile to the west bank from his home in Giza for six years as al-Jabarti claimed, then Nafisa must have visited him there or the couple did not see each other during that period.[47] Either way, Nafisa had considerable autonomy in the management of her home and her property and in the conduct of her social relations with friends. Nafisa's political role is outstanding, perhaps exceptional. However, since we do not have enough information on other Mamluk women, we cannot conclude that her political activities and the influence she wielded within her household were unique. We do know that she served as a trusted intermediary between the French and her husband and that her husband often took her advice and had confidence in her ability to negotiate on his behalf with the French. She must have expected to be able to travel unimpeded around the city, since she was able to go from her home to a secret meeting with General Kléber. We already know that women traveled around the city on donkeys or on foot, visiting the homes of their families and friends, making their Friday visits to the cemeteries, and participating in public festivals and religious holidays.

Yet the lives of Mamluk women might seem somewhat paradoxical to Westerners even today because property rights and legal personhood

coexisted with the harem and veiling, considered markers of severe oppression and the absence of fundamental rights. Since in Western feminist terms, property rights and legal personhood were the prerequisites for autonomy and participation in the public sphere, how could Mamluk women have had these rights when they were secluded, indeed virtually imprisoned, in harems and heavily veiled on the rare occasions when they were allowed outside their homes? What has to be imagined in order for the apparent paradox to be resolved is that the public and private spheres were not as sharply delineated in the eighteenth century as they would be in the modern era and that economic and physical autonomy can coexist with controls on women's sexuality. The harem and veiling were strategies to keep apart men and women who were unrelated to each other in order to preserve society's virtue and to allow males with authority over women to make marriage arrangements for their female dependents. For the Mamluk elite, marriages were political affairs necessary to the construction of links and relationships that strengthened the bonds between men and made a sometimes unstable system more cohesive and less likely to descend into factionalism. When seen like this, there is more resemblance between Western society and Egypt's in the eighteenth century than travelers of the period and some contemporary observers would care to admit. However, we need only consider that Western women achieved property and other legal rights, expanded their educational and work opportunities, and gained equal citizenship through voting rights well before they began to achieve autonomy in the sexual sphere of society, including the right to choose their husbands and to control their reproduction. If this is a paradox, it is not one that is unique to Islamic society.

Women like Amina, Nafisa, and Shawikar might also seem modern to contemporary observers because of the complexity of their lives, the multiplicity of their roles, and the competing demands on their time and their loyalties. In contrast to the reductionist and essentialist view of European travelers and Orientalists who thought of harem women as one-dimensional sexual objects of male lust, women were wives or concubines and sometimes both in one lifetime, as well as mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends. These multiple roles could sometimes lead to tension and conflicting loyalties, as they might have done in the case of Amina if her husband

had not stepped in to restore her son's inheritance. Also, Mamluk women created and were part of interlocking networks of slaves and former slaves to whom they owed lifelong loyalty and devotion. They managed large households from which their husbands or masters were often absent. They were left behind during factional fighting, as they were at the time of the Ottoman intervention and the French invasion, to protect their homes and their property. They owned and managed their own property and the property of other women and men. Like Nafisa, they could be builders of useful constructions, like her *sabil-kuttab,* that were also an expression of Islamic piety and Mamluk aesthetics. They had status in their households and in society, and some of them even made it into the histories of the period written by al-Jabarti and al-Damurdashi.

It takes two, a man and a woman, to create kinship, whether the kin relationship is real or fictive. These ties of kinship acted as a counterweight to the tendency of slave systems like the Mamluk to be unstable and to descend into factionalism. This was a particularly serious issue during the Mamluk revival because the beys lacked the legitimacy of the Mamluk sultans of the previous era and the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul and because the unification of the system under one man, 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, lasted only for a relatively short period. The ties created through kinship added cohesion and continuity to the system and to the households to which they belonged. These kinship ties were strengthened by what appears to have been a conscious strategy of the Mamluks to marry or to take as concubines women who, like themselves, were slaves from Georgia or Circassia. In certain cases the women who shared the same ethnicity were not slaves but their own sisters or daughters whom they married off to their favorite *mamluk*s. In this way, they created a closed system that marked them—men and women—as a ruling elite that was distinguishable from both the Ottomans, whose power they were attempting to usurp, and from the indigenous population.

When Mamluk women banded together to pay the fines demanded by the French or provided assistance to their husbands in exile in Upper Egypt, they were acting not only as individuals but also as members of an elite whose status, power, and wealth they wanted to protect. It becomes particularly clear during the French occupation that the Mamluk system in

Egypt survived, if only for a time, because the women left behind acted to preserve it while Murad and his forces were in exile. If the Mamluk women had capitulated to the French and disavowed their men who were standing against the French, the system would have been considerably if not fatally weakened before the arrival of Ottoman forces and Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt. In other words, Mamluk women were as vested in the survival of the system as the men.

As this chapter demonstrates, gendering the narrative and shifting the focus from men to women adds women to the historical account and should change the way we think about the history of the particular period being studied. Instead of a history of men without women, gender leads us not only to a more inclusive history but also to the recognition of the asymmetry in power between men and women and to a critical analysis of the relations between them within society. In the case of the Mamluk revival period of Egyptian history, women become part of the historical record in ways that challenge us to revise our understanding of the Mamluk resurgence and of how Mamluks, traditionally understood as men, attained and reproduced their power, legitimized themselves, and survived internal factionalism and external threats. When we gender the narrative, the history of the Mamluk revival becomes not only a matter of which armed male factions prevailed in the various conflicts that punctuated the period but also of how strategies related to marriage, kinship construction, and legitimization contributed to the survival of a coherent and cohesive power structure over the long term. Thus women's role within the Mamluk household becomes crucial rather than peripheral.

Fortunately for historians, the voluminous court records, particularly those related to property; the historical chronicles of the time; and the letters, memoirs, and travel accounts of Europeans in Egypt provide the necessary documents that along with theories of gender allow us to integrate women into the heretofore almost exclusively male-dominated history of the Mamluks and their households.

10

Epilogue

European male travelers to Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries connected the harem and veiling to the almost complete subjugation of women under Islam. European male travelers routinely degraded Egyptian harem women in their writings as submissive, not particularly beautiful, rather simple-minded, childlike, and bored with their confinement. For these travelers, who knew very little about Islam and had almost certainly never been inside an elite home, the harem and veiling were evidence of the superiority of Western civilization where women were not shut away in harems.

The Comte de Volney, who visited Egypt and Syria between 1783 and 1785, attributed what he considered the miserable condition of women to Muhammad and the Qur'an for not doing women the honor of treating them as part of the human species. He also claimed, incorrectly, that the government deprived women of all property and personal liberty and made them dependent on a husband or father, a situation that he described as slavery.[1] It was not uncommon for male travel writers in the eighteenth century to describe Mamluk women as slaves or captives of lascivious men, women who were valued only for their sexuality and beauty.

C. S. Sonnini, who visited Egypt between 1777 and 1778, described the women of the Mamluks as "[p]erpetually recluse, or going out but seldom, and always with a veil, or, to speak more correctly, with a mask which entirely covers their face . . . And for whom are so many charms thus carefully preserved: For one man alone, for a tyrant who holds them in captivity."[2]

Writers like the Comte de Volney and Sonnini, while astute observers of their surroundings, knew very little about Islam or about Mamluk

family life and almost certainly had never been invited into a Mamluk home or into a harem. Nevertheless they wrote with certainty about the miserable condition of Mamluk women whose low status they attributed to their seclusion in the harem and to the oppression of Islam.

As Edward Said argued, the construction of knowledge about the Orient was based on the dichotomy between the Western self and the Eastern other and the alleged superiority of Western civilization and Christianity to the civilizations of the East and of Islam.[3] Stuart Hall, the cultural studies theorist, said in his lecture "Race: The Floating Signifier" that society creates meaning through classification and that the classification of difference is linked to power.[4] Western civilization was part of a system of classification created in the West that relegated Islam as a religion and Eastern civilization to a position of inferiority. To a great extent, the inferiority of Eastern cultures was represented by their women, who were at once the cause and the effect of the decline and decay of the indigenous civilization. Characteristics that were attributed by Western observers to harem women were extended to include all women, and those images or representations were highly sexualized.

However, we have the theoretical tools and archival evidence to dismantle the Orientalist representations of travelers and writers of two centuries ago. We can begin by acknowledging that the social practices of seclusion and veiling do not have a fixed and universal meaning that transcends time and place. Rather we should understand them as socially constructed practices whose meaning is embedded in the history, culture, politics, and gender system of any given historical period and that change over time. The harem and veiling were not the sole determinants of women's status and the meaning of these practices was not fixed or permanent but relational and subject to change. Nowhere is this more apparent than in a comparison of two harem women, Nafisa al-Bayda, whose life spanned the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and Huda Sha'rawi, who was born in the late nineteenth century and died in the twentieth. Both grew up in large extended households that practiced polygamy and concubinage; both belonged to the elite in their particular time periods, lived in harems, veiled when they left their homes, and attained status, influence, and even power within their households and in the wider society.

Nafisa ended her days in 1816 in Cairo as a harem woman who had acted to aid her husband, Murad Bey, in his ultimately futile fight against the French occupying forces to return the Mamluks to power. It seems clear from the actions of Nafisa, at least, that the support of the Mamluk women whose husbands had retreated to Upper Egypt after being overwhelmed by French forces was crucial to maintaining Mamluk resistance to the French. The women acted as members of an elite whose status, wealth, and power they wanted to protect. On the other hand, Sha'rawi famously removed her veil after her trip to Rome in 1923 to attend the meeting of the International Women's Suffrage Association (IWSA), thereby signaling that she had now assumed a public role as the leader of the women's movement in Egypt. The decision by Sha'rawi to attend the Rome meeting and to establish the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) came in response to Egyptian independence in 1922 and the constitution written by male nationalists that did not enfranchise women, even though women like Sha'rawi and Safiyya Zaghloul, wife of the leader of the Wafd Party, Saad Zaghloul, were active in the 1919 Revolution and the resistance to British rule that continued until formal independence.

The movement of Sha'rawi out of the private domain of the family and into the public domain of politics represented the rejection by Sha'rawi and other upper- and middle-class women of the demarcation of space imposed upon them by the male nationalists who led the struggle against the British for an independent Egypt, wrote the constitution that deprived women of the right to vote, and took charge of the government after independence. Sha'rawi has been represented by scholars such as Margot Badran, Leila Ahmed, and Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot as engaged in a rebellion against the so-called harem culture and her seclusion in the private sphere of the home that the harem was said to represent.[5] However, this is only part of the story of Sha'rawi's life because this argument does not situate the harem within the context of the political, social, and economic transformation that Egypt underwent in the nineteenth century. Thus it does not take into account the negative effects that Egypt's transition to the modern had on women like Sha'rawi. The issue was not so much harem life but rather the new public sphere of politics and civic engagement from which women were now formally excluded. In other words, Sha'rawi's harem was not Nafisa's harem.

As the preceding chapters have shown, Nafisa al-Bayda and other Mamluk women were able to achieve status, wealth, influence, and even power in the eighteenth century for a variety of reasons. After their emancipation from slavery and their conversion to Islam, which took place before their marriage, they gained all the rights of freeborn Muslim women. They exercised these rights, particularly their property rights, as their *waqf* documents demonstrate, and were able to amass large estates composed of lucrative urban commercial real estate. As autonomous economic agents, they were able to assure incomes for themselves to which their husbands had no claim.

As concubines or wives, they were members of powerful households, which provided them with avenues of advancement and access to wealth. Concubines were legal under Islamic law and were entitled to support for themselves and their children by their master. Wives were entitled to a dowry and, according to the law, men assumed complete responsibility for the financial support of their wives and children. The instability of the Mamluk system provided women with opportunities to increase their influence within the household. As potential usurpers of power from the Ottoman government, the Mamluks organized themselves into households that vied with the Ottomans and each other for power and control of Egypt's tax revenues. The fragmented nature of Mamluk power made the internecine warfare that characterized the era inevitable but also gave women opportunities to enhance their influence because they were important to the stability and continuity of the household and the reproduction of its power. Women like Nafisa al-Bayda and Shawikar Qadin played important roles in legitimizing the succession of men to power, and they also became living symbols of lineage continuity. The lives and marriages of Shawikar and Nafisa spanned the crucial period of time when the Qazdughli *bayt* was emerging as the most powerful household among the various Mamluks. They were at various times the consorts, wives, and widows of the men who laid the foundations of Qazdughli power, including 'Uthman Katkhuda, Ibrahim Katkhuda, and 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, and they survived them all. Shawikar and Nafisa, like other Mamluk wives and widows, provided through their longevity and multiple marriages important elements of cohesion and continuity within their households.

During the period of the Mamluk resurgence, the household was the locus of power. However, this does not mean that space during the Mamluk era was divided between the public sphere where Mamluk political and military power was located and the private space of the home where women were secluded or virtually imprisoned in the domestic realm of the family. The boundaries between public and private were fluid because the home of an eighteenth-century Mamluk grandee was both his military and political headquarters and also the domain of the family. While family life was being lived in the homes and palaces of the grandees, so too was political life, simultaneously, since the home was also a house or *bayt* and thus the center of Mamluk power. Historically, women have done better when power was lodged in households and their proximity to the head of the household as wife, daughter, mother, or sister gave them status and influence and access to wealth. This is a cross-cultural phenomenon of which there are many examples such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, the queens and royal mistresses of ancien régime France, and the *valide sultan,* the mother of the sultan's son and heir during the Ottoman period.

In some scholarly literature, the harem has often been reconfigured as the family quarters within an elite household in an attempt to desexualize the harem and to replace the image of the odalisque with the image of mother, wife, and household manager. Marsot, in her article "The Revolutionary Gentlewomen in Egypt," points out that harem women ran households the size of small hotels, which demanded from them a high degree of efficiency and organization to run smoothly.[6] Marsot makes a convincing argument that harem women were able to take up and succeed in lives of public service after the 1919 Revolution because they had learned the necessary skills to manage their households. Marsot's information about how the harem was organized and women's role in the household came from her elderly relatives and family friends and thus describes the harem of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Her argument is based on the idea that Egyptian society was divided historically into separate spheres for men and women with women confined to the domestic realm of the home. However, this division of space appears anachronistic when applied to harem life in the eighteenth century.

The tactic of reconfiguring the harem as the domestic sphere of the home in a society divided into the public male world of work and politics and the private world of home and family shifts the emphasis from the high sexualized images promoted by Europeans travelers and writers to one of domesticity, child-rearing, and household management. The British championed the restructuring of the harem not only in Egypt but also in India as the private domestic sphere of the household. This newly configured domestic space would be desexualized; polygamy would be replaced with monogamy and the odalisque replaced with woman as wife, mother, and household manager. Thus the harem/*zanana* would be transformed to conform to Victorian norms concerning the proper roles of men and women in modern capitalist society.[7]

Whether the harem is represented as the domain of the odalisque or the domain of the wife and mother, conceptually it remained a separate space within the larger structure of the home. However, rather than conceptualizing the harem this way, that is, as rigidly defined and impermeable inside space that was prisonlike in its confinement, we should see the harem as constructed by the movement of a woman's body through space both inside and outside the home and space itself as permeable and flexible. Inside the home, certain devices like *mashrabiyya* and the layout of the home itself gave women access to almost the entirety of the home while protecting her from encounters with unrelated men. Outside the home, veiling made a woman unapproachable by men and constructed a harem, or an inviolable space, around her. Thus these two practices are linked. There is also sufficient evidence of female mobility from Western travelers, who on the one hand equate the harem with imprisonment but on the other note their presence in various venues, such as in the cemeteries on Fridays or at public occasions such as the opening of Cairo's main canal, which brought out all the high-ranking Mamluks and the Ottoman governor and his entourage. Mamluk women were clearly recognizable by their boats on the Nile, which had screens of *mashrabiyya* to prevent them from being seen. Boats such as these carried women on pleasure trips on the *birka* at Azbakiyya, the most elite neighborhood in eighteenth-century Cairo.

To suggest a century after the death of Nafisa al-Bayda that her harem and Huda Sha'rawi's were the same is to miss the point that political and economic conditions had changed in ways that disadvantaged elite women of Sha'rawi's generation. It also misses the point that a dialogue of women's rights had emerged as well as national and international women's movements demanding the right of women to vote as well as other rights such as education and work outside the home. To dismantle Western representations of the harem and veiling and to understand how elite women lived their lives and how certain social practices changed over time in several ways, it is therefore useful to compare the lives of two women, Nafisa—the wife of one of the most powerful Mamluks of the eighteenth century, Ali Bey al-Kabir, and after his death the wife of the last Mamluk, Murad Bey—and Huda Sha'rawi, the founder of the EFU and an activist for women's rights. On the surface, there are many similarities between the two women. Both women belonged to powerful, elite households characterized by polygamous unions, concubinage, and female seclusion.

Huda Sha'rawi was born into the household of her father, Muhammad Sultan Pasha, in Minya in 1879, sixty-three years after Nafisa's death. Sultan Pasha was a wealthy landowner who had risen from the local post of *shaykh al-balad* (village headman) to provincial administrator. Later he became president of the Assembly of Deputies (Shura al-Nawwab) and, after it was dissolved, a member of the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura). At this point, he moved his family to Cairo, and Sha'rawi writes fondly in her memoirs of her life there with her mother, Iqbal, and her father's wife, Hasiba, whom she called Umm Kabira; her brother, Umar; and various servants and slaves. Sultan Pasha is representative of the Egyptian landowners and provincial officials who merged with the Turco-Circassians into one group of elites who dominated Egypt's political and economic life.

Badran and Ahmed believe that Sha'rawi's mother was a concubine and not the legal wife of Sultan Pasha. In her introduction to Sha'rawi's memoirs, Badran describes Iqbal as "the last of Sultan Pasha's several consorts."[8] Badran cites Sultan Pasha's *waqf* document to claim that Iqbal had never attained the status of wife.[9] Ahmed believes that Iqbal's concern for the welfare of her son, Umar, indicates that she may have been a concubine rather than a wife.[10] Huda Sha'rawi's mother, a Circassian refugee, was

reared in the home of Raghib Bey, a member of the Turco-Circassian elite, where she became the companion of one of his daughters, who took Iqbal with her when she married and set up her own household. Later, Raghib Bey presented Iqbal to Sultan Pasha, with whom she had two children, Huda and her brother. However, in her memoir, Sha'rawi wrote that her mother and father were married and described how devastated her mother was when Sultan Pasha died in 1884.[11] Circassian women were prized by members of the Egyptian elite as concubines and wives. Even when slavery was outlawed in 1877, the traffic in women from the Caucasus continued because the Egyptian elite preferred them as concubines and wives.

Nafisa was probably sold or kidnapped into slavery at the age of thirteen, the same age as Sha'rawi when she was married to her much older cousin and guardian, Ali Sha'rawi. Nothing is known about Nafisa's origins, but since her name as recorded in official documents included the appellation "al-Bayda," the white, we can assume she came from Georgia or Circassia. Nafisa became the wife of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir, who was the most powerful Mamluk of his era and who attempted to consolidate power in his household, the Qazdughli. 'Ali Bey built Nafisa a splendid palace in the most exclusive residential quarter of Cairo, on the lake or *birka* of Azbakiyya. After his death, Nafisa eventually married Murad Bey, who dominated the last part of the Mamluk era and led the resistance to the French after the 1798 invasion until his death of plague in 1801.

Both Nafisa and Sha'rawi used the legal rights given to them by Islam and their privileges as members of the elite to improve their status and empower themselves. Nafisa exercised her property rights under the law to invest in Cairo's commercial economy and residential real estate and to become a builder of a *sabil-kuttab,* a combined school for boys and public water fountain, near the Bab Zuwayla gate that is now registered as an Islamic monument. When Sha'rawi was thirteen, she was married to her cousin and legal guardian, Ali Sha'rawi, who had children with his concubine at the time of the marriage. Sha'rawi made use of the provision in her marriage contract that stipulated that her husband would free his concubine after his marriage to her and commit himself to a monogamous union. It was Sha'rawi's mother who insisted that this stipulation be inserted into the marriage contract. When Sha'rawi learned that her husband violated

this provision and had returned to his concubine who was pregnant with his child, she left him and lived apart from her husband for seven years.

Both women also became politically visible: Nafisa often played the role of the intermediary between the French representative in Cairo and her husband, Murad Bey, and was the intermediary between the French who invaded Egypt in 1798 and her husband, who led the Mamluk resistance from Upper Egypt. Sha'rawi was an activist against the British during the 1919 Revolution and president of the Women's Central Committee of the Wafd Party, which was the preeminent political party of the post–World War I period that organized and led the resistance to the British known as the 1919 Revolution. She was also the founder of the Egyptian Feminist Union. Nafisa, too, had insurrectionary tendencies exhibited when the Ottomans reimposed their authority in Egypt after the French evacuation. In 1804 Nafisa was summoned before the pasha at the Citadel to defend herself against charges that she was abetting insurrection by providing funds to senior army officers to fight alongside rebellious Mamluks by offering to pay their salaries. Both have left an enduring legacy, Nafisa's in stone with her *sabil-kuttab* and in the chronicle of al-Jabarti, who recorded her history, and Sha'rawi in the Egyptian Feminist Union, which she founded, and as a pioneer in the national and global struggle for women's rights.

Nevertheless, Nafisa and Sha'rawi struggled to achieve opposite goals. Nafisa and other Mamluk women resisted the French and the Ottomans in order to return the Mamluks to power and preserve a way of life that gave them status, influence, and wealth. On the other hand, Sha'rawi with other women of her class chafed at the restrictions imposed on them by seclusion and veiling and found in their opposition to the British a path to political activism that would lead to the creation of an independent women's movement working for suffrage and expanded rights for women. In her own life, Sha'rawi conveyed her dissatisfaction with the concubinage and polygamy that characterized the households of many elite families. She came down clearly in support of monogamous, companionate marriage. What had changed in the century following the collapse and defeat of the Mamluks?

The reimposition of Ottoman rule on Egypt following the defeat and withdrawal of French forces from the country and the collapse of the Mamluks led eventually to the consolidation of power in the family of

Muhammad 'Ali Pasha and his male descendants, known by the title *khedive,* and the rise of a centralized bureaucratic state with a national army. In the economic realm, Egypt was integrated into a world economy primarily as a producer of cotton and other commodities and as a consumer of manufactured goods from the industrializing countries of Europe, particularly Great Britain. Egypt lost its role as a hub in a global trading system that stretched from Africa and the Middle East to Asia when the center of trade and industry shifted west to Europe and the Atlantic and away from the Indian Ocean. Egypt's manufacturing sector also declined, particularly in textiles, since it was no longer able to compete with the machine-made textiles of a rapidly industrializing Europe. Muhammad 'Ali's attempt to replicate the Industrial Revolution failed for several reasons but was definitely extinguished after he was forced by Britain in coalition with other European powers to withdraw his forces from Syria, which Egypt had invaded in 1831. Egypt was forced by its defeat in 1840 to abide by the Anglo-Ottoman Treaty that required the state to dismantle its monopolies over agricultural production and manufacturing and open itself to free trade. Eventually, agricultural land, a major source of wealth because of the demand for Egypt's particularly fine long staple cotton, became the de facto private property of members of the ruling family and their close allies. The land law of 1858 began the formal transition to private property in Egypt.

In the eighteenth century, when power was located in households of the Mamluk grandees, female members of those households had rank, high status, access to wealth and property, considerable influence, and even power. The distinction between public and private space was not as relevant to women's status as it became in the nineteenth century when power was relocated to a clearly demarcated public sphere from which women were excluded. In the Egyptian case, once power was removed from the household and relocated in a reconfigured public sphere, women were effectively stranded in a space that became almost purely domestic. When this relocation of power coincided with a demand that women have either no public role or only one that fit their primary domestic role of service to the family, defined as her husband and children or the nation, then the options, autonomy, and life choices of upper- and ruling-class women were diminished. In the economic realm, women lost the opportunities they had to

invest in Cairo's urban commercial economy due to the transformation of Egypt's role in global trade and manufacturing. With the decline of Egypt's urban commercial sector, women were no longer able to make the kinds of investments that made Mamluk women like Nafisa wealthy. Women also were at an economic disadvantage, according to Marsot, because banks and financial institutions like the stock exchanges and insurance companies that either were European or followed European procedures did not allow women to open bank accounts or engage in other financial transactions in their own name.[12]

In the nationalist discourse of the late nineteenth century, the debate over the role that women would have in an independent Egypt became known as the "woman question." Male nationalists including liberal reformers like Qasim Amin argued for education for women so that they could be more effective homemakers and mothers, especially to their sons, who would have to take their places in the country's capitalist economy and as officials in the national government.[13] However, they balked at the notion of women in the workforce and eventually, after Britain recognized Egypt's nominal independence in 1922, they refused to grant women the right to vote.

In the transition from the eighteenth-century household as the locus of political and military power to the centralized bureaucratic state and capitalist economy of the nineteenth century, a newly demarcated public sphere arose from which women were excluded. The proper role for a woman in the emerging modern capitalist state was as a wife, mother, and homemaker. She became known as the "New Woman" whose proper and natural role as wife and mother relegated her to the domestic realm.[14] Strengthening the family, transforming housekeeping into a science, and rearing healthy children were not private concerns but national ones. The family was portrayed as the foundation of the nation, and thus women's role within the private sphere of the home became crucial to the nationalist project of building up the state and its power. Discursively, women were transformed into nationalists by their willingness to accept their role in the domestic sphere as a service to the nation while politics, voting, civic engagement, and higher education leading to professional work outside the home became the domain of men.

In the century between the death of Nafisa al-Bayda and the emergence of Huda Sha‘rawi into the political life of Egypt as an activist for women's rights, Egypt had been transformed politically and economically. In the new century, women needed access to the public sphere to obtain education and paid work outside the home. In order to achieve the reforms sought by the EFU, women needed equal citizenship, the right to vote, and election to public office. In 1923, after the return of Sha‘rawi to Egypt from the IWSA conference in Rome and the subsequent creation of the EFU, the organization issued a list of reforms it believed were necessary to improve the lives of women that included the following: raising the legal ages of males and females at marriage to eighteen and sixteen, respectively; extending women's legal custody of children; regulating *talaq* (divorce) by permitting it only in serious cases and in the presence of a *qadi* who would oblige arbitration; restricting men's practice of polygamy; and abolishing *bayt al-ta‘a*,[15] which could force a woman to return to her husband. The EFU also was committed to women's suffrage.

In effect, the founders of the EFU were rewriting the terms of what Deniz Kandiyotti defined as the "patriarchal bargain" between men and women. Kandiyotti has defined the "patriarchal bargain" as women's strategies of maneuver and resistance within systems of male dominance.[16] For example, the eighteenth-century upper-class household was characterized by polygamy, concubinage, seclusion and veiling, and restraints on women's sexual autonomy, but, as noted above, women also had rank and status as members of powerful households as well as access to wealth, considerable economic autonomy, influence, and even power. The transformation of the Mamluks of the eighteenth century into the Turco-Circassian ruling elite of the nineteenth, which entailed the relocation of power from the household to the institutions of the modern, centralizing state, had deleterious effects on the status of women. In the century that followed, women lost influence and power as members of important households when political life was relocated into a public sphere that was exclusively male, and the harem was reconfigured as the domestic sphere where women would be occupied exclusively as wives and mothers. Women's ability to acquire wealth as owners and investors declined as the Egyptian economy was transformed, and new restrictions on their economic autonomy were implemented.

The issue confronting women of Sha'rawi's time was not the harem but that the political and economic foundation that supported harem life in the past had collapsed, leaving women on their own to face political disenfranchisement and economic disempowerment. Thus, in the new century, women like Sha'rawi concluded that in the modern state, they required equal citizenship and the right to participate in its political life. In order to survive and prosper in the transformed economic realm, they needed access to education and to work outside the home. They also sought another model for family life that would replace arranged marriages and polygamy with monogamous, companionate marriage. Through movements such as the EFU, they struggled to achieve a public role in order to press for reforms and to recover some of the influence, power, and economic autonomy that they had lost in the transition to the modern.

Notes

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Introduction

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21. In spring 2005, the Women's Studies program at the University of Michigan, where Rubin is a faculty member in the Department of Anthropology and the Residential College, celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of *Toward an Anthropology of Women,* which included Rubin's article. The Women's Studies program marked the anniversary in its spring 2005 newsletter, which can be located at http://www.lsa.umich.edu /women/about/s05news/traffric.html.

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1. Reimagining the Harem: From Orientalist Fantasies to Historical Reconstruction

1. Among the travelers to Egypt who wrote about harem women are Sonnini, *Travels;* Carsten Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia and Other Countries in the East,* trans. Robert Heron (1792; reprint, Beirut: Librarie du Liban, n.d.); Etienne Savary, *Lettres sur l'Egypte,* vol. 1 (Paris: Chez Onfroi, 1785); Comte de Volney (Constantin-François Chasseboeuf), *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785* (Paris: Chez Volland and Chez Desenne, 1789), 1:200; and Vivant Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt,* 3 vols. (1803; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1973). The comments about the childlike nature of harem women were made by Niebuhr (*Travels,* 123), and their lack of beauty was noted by the Comte de Volney (*Voyage,* 95), who based his remarks on comments made by a woman merchant who sold cloth and other goods to harem women, probably the wife of the French consul, Charles Magallon. Her opinion was that not even ten of them could be considered true beauties.

2. Sonnini, *Travels,* 2:451–52.

3. For Orientalist images of women and of the Orient in general, see Mary Anne Stevens, ed., *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse—The Allure of North Africa and the Near East* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art in association with Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984). The book resulted from an exhibit at the National Gallery of Art.

4. Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt.*

5. European travelers who encountered dancers on the street generally called them *'alma* or *'alima.* However, there were two types of dancers, *ghawazi,* who danced in public, and the more refined *'awalim,* who were invited to dance in upper-class homes. Khaled Fahmy discusses this distinction as well as the ban on prostitutes and dancers in Cairo in "Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century," in *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East,* ed. Eugene Rogan (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 77–103.

6. Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt,* 113–19.

7. Ibid., 119–120. In discussing Kuchuk Hanum's inability to respond sexually, Flaubert is referring to the practice of cliterodectomy.

8. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 6.

9. Ibid. See in particular the introduction, 1–28.

10. Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt.*

11. Joyce Zonana, "The Sultan and the Slave: Feminist Orientalism and the Structure of *Jane Eyre*," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 31 (1993): 165–90; Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).

12. The Enlightenment had the effect of constructing both men and women as subjects. However, women's autonomy was restricted because women as a group were considered to be less rational and more emotional than men and thus not fit for the public world of work or civic engagement. The female subject was supposed to find fulfillment and self-expression within the domestic sphere as wife and mother. See for example Elizabeth Fox Genovese, "Women and the Enlightenment," in Bridenthal, Koonz, and Stuard, *Becoming Visible,* 252–78. Brontë, who published *Jane Eyre* in 1847, Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot), and Jane Austen certainly wrote about the restrictions of women's autonomy within the patriarchal family structure of the nineteenth century. Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women,* published in 1792; Marion Reid in *A Plea for Women,* published in 1842; and Olympe de Gouges in the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen,* published during the French Revolution, all wrote about the plight of women, and Reid and de Gouges even called for the right of women to suffrage and equal citizenship. However, as Gerda Lerner has written, there were women who wrote about the restrictions on women but were not part of a larger women's movement. As such, they can be described as having a feminist consciousness but without the theory and activism that define modern feminism. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993). See also Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987); and Joan Wallach Scott, ed., *Feminism and History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).

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53. The view long held by scholars that there was a continuation of the institutions and traditions of the sultanate has been challenged by Jane Hathaway, who takes a Turco-centric view of events in Egypt after the Ottoman conquest. Primarily, she argues that the household of the Ottoman sultan, rather than that of the Mamluk sultans, became the model for the households that developed in Egypt from the gangs or factions that formed within the military garrisons. In other words, she contends that there were no Mamluk households in late seventeenth-century Egypt, only households modeled after the Ottoman and made up of *mamluk*s (slaves). Hathaway's work sheds light on the origins and development of the factions that formed inside the *ojaq*s (military garrisons) and of what became the pre-eminent household of the eighteenth century, the Qazdughli. However, the organizational model for the military factions, which formed inside the barracks and which she describes as households, was not the model for the political households of the beys, which more closely resemble the households of the period of the Mamluk sultanate. In addition, it is anachronistic to argue that the Ottoman provided the model for the neo-Mamluk households since the slave-based Mamluk households that arose on the heels of the Mongol invasion in the

late thirteenth century clearly predate the Ottoman's own version of the premodern political household. While Mamluk sultans were ruling an empire from the Citadel in Cairo that included Syria and the Hijaz, the Ottomans were still a political and military force based on the *ghazi* (religious warrior). Hathaway's position assumes a cultural and historical amnesia on the part of the Mamluk beys who were integrated into the Ottoman imperial administration after the conquest. This is contradicted by evidence from other scholars, in particular Winter, whose research demonstrates that the resurgent beylicate had institutional and cultural links to the period of the sultanate. Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997).

54. Ayalon, "Studies in al-Jabarti," 297.

3. Slaves in the Family: Islam, Household Slavery, and the Construction of Kinship

1. As Toledano has noted, poor peasants from the Caucasus hoped to improve their economic and social status by willingly selling their daughters to the slave dealers in the hope they would be sold to one of the empire's elite households. See Ehud Toledano, *Slavery and Its Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1998), 31.

2. For the prices paid for white slaves, men and women, from the Caucasus in the nineteenth century, see Ehud Toledano, *The Ottoman Slave Trade and Its Suppression: 1840–1890* (Princeton: Univ. of Princeton Press, 1982), 65–67.

3. Khadiga Khatun's endowment deed is no. 1174 in the Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo. A good study of the law and tradition relating to religious endowments *(waqf)* is John Robert Barnes, *An Introduction to Religious Foundations in the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986).

4. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).

5. Chattel slavery existed in the ancient Near East. In Babylon, it was defined in the code of Hammurabi, and one of its features was that a slave could be sold or inherited. As the laws governing chattel slavery evolved in the earliest civilizations, it was almost universally agreed that a slave, like an animal, could be bought, sold, traded, leased, mortgaged, bequeathed, presented as a gift, pledged for a debt, included in a dowry, or seized in a bankruptcy. Eventually the features of chattel slavery were codified in Roman law, which became the basis of the laws regulating slavery in Europe and the New World. See Seymour Drescher and Stanley L. Engerman, eds., *A Historical Guide to World Slavery* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), ix–xii.

6. For studies of non-American slavery, see Martin A. Klein, ed., *Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1993); James L. Watson, ed., *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), and Watson's introduction, "Slavery as an Institution: Open and Closed Systems of Slavery," 1–15; Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds., *Slavery in Africa: Historical and*

Anthropological Perspectives (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1977); Claire C. Robertson and Martin H. Klein, eds., *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Claude Meillassoux, translated by Alide Dasnois, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991); Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); Maria Joschak, *Concubines and Bondservants: The Social History of a Chinese Custom* (London: Zed Books, 1988); Allan G. B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa: The Institution in Saharan and Sudanic Africa and the Trans-Saharan Trade* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1970); Janet Ewald and Junius P. Rodriguez, eds., *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery,* 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1997); Drescher and Engerman, *Historical Guide;* and J. O. Hunwick, "Black Slaves in the Mediterranean World: Introduction to a Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 13, no. 1 (Apr. 1992): 5–38; For a definition of slavery, see Suzanne Miers, "Slavery: A Question of Definition," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 24, no. 2 (Aug. 2003): 1–16.

7. Three recent exceptions are the study edited by Miura Toru and John Edward Philips, *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa* (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000); the volume edited by Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: American Univ. in Cairo Press, 2010); and Madeline Zilfi's *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012).

8. Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise: 1800–1909* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: An Historical Enquiry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990); and Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1990).

9. Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire,* xviii; Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World,* x.

10. David Ayalon, *Mamluk Military Society* (London: Valorium Reprints, 1979) and *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt 1250–1517;* and Gabriel Baer's chapter "Slavery and Its Abolition," *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969). See also the recent comparative study edited by Toru and Phillips, *Slave Elites;* Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980); Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981); and the chapter on Sudanese slaves in Egypt in the late Ottoman period in Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003), 105–34.

11. See the work of Powell and Toledano cited in notes 10 and 2, respectively, of this chapter. In addition see Toledano, "Representing the Slave's Body in Ottoman Society," *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 23, no. 2 (Aug. 2002): 57–74 and also Toledano's "Shemsigul: A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo," in

Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East, ed. Edmund Burke III (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), 59–74. Also see Peirce, *Imperial Harem.*

12. The British and French were often reluctant to abolish slavery in their colonies because of the possible economic and social consequences. East Africa was a case in point, especially Zanzibar, where there was a legal trade in slaves for export to the Middle East as well as plantations worked by slaves producing cash crops for export. However, the British took the first step toward abolition of slavery in Zanzibar in 1897 by abolishing the legal status of slavery, so that slavery had no legal standing in the courts. However, this step did not apply to concubines. The British were reluctant to disturb male hegemony over women and to jeopardize the support of male elites by applying abolition decrees to concubines. See Drescher and Engerman, *Historical Guide,* 1–3. This was also the case in the Ottoman Empire, although Britain was in the forefront of the effort to abolish the slave trade. See Toledano, *Slavery and Its Abolition;* Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire;* and Powell, *Different Shade.*

13. Peirce, *Imperial Harem.*

14. Piterberg, "Formation," 275–89.

15. Robertson and Klein, *Women and Slavery,* 3.

16. Ibid., 8–9.

17. Ibid., 7.

18. Michele Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Women, Culture and Society, An Overview," in *Women, Culture and Society,* ed. Michele Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1977), 28.

19. Ibid., 29.

20. According to Hunwick (*Black Slaves,* 15), female slaves from Ethiopia were prized as concubines by the middle class, although other female African slaves were destined for domestic labor. White slaves from Circassia and Georgia were the most sought after.

21. See Peirce, *Imperial Harem,* 279–85.

22. She is named this way in the deed for her religious endowment, no. 22 in the Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

23. Her religious endowment deed is no. 2441 in the Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

24. For a discussion the law relating to slavery and the various kinds of slavery practiced in the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire, see Lewis, particularly chap. 1 of *Race and Slavery in the Middle East.*

25. According to Erdem, whether a people, Jews or Christians, were subject to the *devshirme* seemed to hinge on their way of entry into Ottoman jurisdiction. If they willingly submitted to Ottoman authority, they were granted *dhimmi* status and were exempted from the *devshirme.* However, once they were theoretically enslaved, the sultan would have the right of ownership over these forcibly captured, captive populations. Erdem believes this explains why the Bosnians and the Albanians were not exempted from the *devshirme* after their conversion. He also believes that the *devshirme,* at least initially, was not incompatible

with Islamic law *(shari'a).* Erdem's opinion on this point is not shared by Lewis or Crone. See Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire,* 1–4.

26. Roman law and the legal system based on it denied the legality of slave marriage. In legal terms, this meant that there was no presumptive paternity. Thus a child born to a slave mother was the mother's alone. See Drescher and Engerman, *Historical Guide,* 218.

27. See E. Savage, "Berbers and Blacks: Ibadi Slave Traffic in Eighth-Century North Africa," *Journal of African History* 33 (1992): 351–68; and Daniel Pipes, "Black Soldiers in Early Muslim Armies," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 1 (1980): 87–94 for accounts of the rebellion as an uprising of East African slaves. The origin of the slaves in Mesopotamia and the composition of the rebellion are being challenged on the basis of new research by scholars such as Nigel D. Furlonge, "Revisiting the Zanj and Re-visioning Revolt: Complexities of the Zanj Conflict (868–883)," *Negro History Bulletin* 62, no. 4 (1999): 7–14; and Ghada Hashem Talhami, "The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 10, no. 3 (1977): 443–61.

28. See Lewis, *Race and Slavery;* Halil Inalcik, "Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern,* ed. A. Ascher, B. K. Kiraly, and T. Halasi-Kun (New York: Brooklyn College, 1979), 25–43; and Madeline Zilfi on domestic servitude, "Servants, Slaves and the Domestic Order in the Middle East," *Hawwa: Journal of Women in the Middle East and the Islamic World* 1, no. 2 (2004): 131–51.

29. Lewis, *Race and Slavery.*

30. An excellent discussion of slavery in the Islamic world remains R. Brunschvig's entry in the *Encyclopedia of Islam,* vol. 1, *A–B* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 24–40.

31. *Holy Qur'an,* 458.

32. Ibid., 191.

33. Ibid., V:89, 270.

34. Ibid., XC:13–16, 1739.

35. Ibid., II:177, 69.

36. Ibid., XXIV:33, 906.

37. Ibid., XXIII:6, 874; similar verses in the Qur'an that permit men to have lawful sexual relations with women other than their wives include XXXIII:50, 1121–22; LXX:30, 1609; and IV:3, 179, which limits the number of wives a man can have to four but states that if a man fears he cannot treat four wives equally, he should marry one and take a concubine.

38. See Mahbuba's Waqf no. 3131, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

39. Sally G. McMillen, "Women in the Old South," in *A Companion to the American South,* ed. John B. Boles (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 191–211; and Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1991).

40. McLaurin, *Celia,* 91.

41. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 33.

42. Thomas D. Morris, "Slavery and the Rules of Evidence in Criminal Trials," in *Slavery and the Law,* ed. Paul Finkelman (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1997), 209.

43. Mark V. Tushnet, *Slave Law in the American South: State v. Mann in History and Literature* (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2003), 1. On the subject of slave law in the American South, see also Finkelman, *Slavery and the Law,* and in particular Finkelman's introduction, "The Centrality of Slavery in American Legal Development," 3–26.

44. Cited in Finkelman, *Slavery and the Law,* 7.

45. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Law,* 4.

46. William W. Fisher III, "Ideology and Imagery in the Law of Slavery," in Finkelman, *Slavery and the Law,* 45.

47. Finkelman, *Slavery and the Law,* 7.

48. Since Khadiga does not name any children of hers as heirs to the income of her trust, we are unable to say with certitude that she bore children during her marriage to Ahmad Katkhuda.

49. From "Manumission," in Drescher and Engerman, *Historical Guide,* 261.

50. For a discussion of this point, see Drescher and Engerman, *Historical Guide,* 28.

51. Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (1964; New York: Clarendon Press, 1982).

52. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death,* in particular chap. 2, "Authority, Alienation and Social Death."

53. Ibid.

54. This is a definition of chattel slavery offered by William D. Phillips Jr. in *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1985).

55. This is the position taken by Miers and Kopytoff in their study of African slavery. Both see slavery within a range of coerced relationship and both stress a process of incorporation into kin groups. Kopytoff points out that in studying slavery anthropologists avoid terms like "ownership" in favor of the analysis of specific rights that persons have in each other. He argues that in every social system, cultural notions of rights and obligations define the relationship between people, groups, and institutions. Further, when a society publicly recognizes and legalizes sexual unions between masters and slaves, slavery becomes entangled with kinship and both operate as parts of the same system. Thus the rights-in-persons governing relations among kinsmen could be merged with the rights-in-persons that define the master-slave relationship. This is very different from the ownership of a person by another person, which is founded on a set of Western assumptions and the Western experience of slavery in the New World. Ownership of slaves in the New World model is based on property rights, which were the most expansive in the English-speaking world. British law was particularly intolerant of restrictions on property ownership. Kopytoff argues that New World slavery was a particular historical phenomenon with cultural peculiarities that set it apart from the slave systems of other times and places. Kopytoff's arguments are relevant

not only to African slavery but also to slavery in Islamic societies. See Miers and Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa,* and Kopytoff's essay in the *Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery,* vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 676–81.

4. The Mamluk Household: How a House Became a Home

1. The first Mamluk sultanate, the Bahri, accepted the principle of familial succession, so this period was dominated by two men, Sultan Qalawun (1279–90) and his son and successor, al-Nasir Muhammad, who reigned with two interruptions from 1293 to 1341. During the period of the Mamluk revival, there are other examples of father-to-son succession such Isma'il Bey and his son Iwaz, and Hasan Gawish, one of the architects of the Qazdughli rise to power, and his son 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda.

2. Raymond, "Le Caire," 30.

3. Holt, "Last Phase," 144.

4. Crecelius, *Roots of Modern Egypt,* 27.

5. Winter, *Egyptian Society,* 50.

6. Ayalon, *Studies on the Mamluks,* 291.

7. Ibid., 297.

8. Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times,* trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), 4.

9. Ibid., 4–5.

10. Ibid., 4.

11. Ibid., 5.

12. Ibid.

13. Edward Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon,* book 1, part 5 (New York: F. Ungar, 1955), 2201.

14. Ibid.

15. Jack Goody, "The Evolution of the Family," in *Household and Family in Past Time,* ed. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), 103; and Richard Wall, Jean Rubin, and Peter Laslett, eds. *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 7.

16. Ibid., 24.

17. Ibid., 26.

18. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:383.

19. See the necrology of Murad Bey in al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:169.

20. David Ayalon, "Studies in al-Jabarti: Notes on the Transformation of Mamluk Society in Egypt under the Ottomans," in *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt 1250–1517* (London: Valorium Reprints, 1997), 297.

21. Al-Jabarti, *Merveilles,* 1:146; in Arabic, 1:153.

22. Al-Jabarti, *Merveilles,* 1:210.

23. Al-Jabarti, *Merveilles,* 1:275.

24. For studies of the Egyptian census, see Philippe Fargues, "Family and Household in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo," in *Family History in the Middle East: Household, Property and Gender,* ed. Beshara Doumani (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2003), 23–50; and of the Ottoman census, see Alan Duben, "Turkish Families and Households in Historical Perspective," in Doumani, *Family History,* 75–87.

25. In spite of these obstacles, Ottoman-era researchers have been creative in their use of court records including religious endowments, marriage contracts, dowries, property transfers, and wills. See the work of Haim Gerber, "The Ottoman and Turkish Families," *Journal of Family History* 14, no. 4 (1989): 409–21; Margaret L. Meriwether, *The Kin Who Count: Family and Society in Ottoman Aleppo, 1770–1840* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1999); Judith Tucker, "The Ties that Bound: Women and Family in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Nablus," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1991), 233–53; and Ken Cuno, "Joint Family Households and Rural Notables in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27 (1995): 485–502.

26. See, for example, David Herlihy's *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1985) for a discussion of polygamy and concubinage in Ireland among the wealthy and powerful. For the effects of the Gregorian reforms on women, see Susan Mosher Stuard, "The Dominion of Gender: Women's Fortunes in the High Middle Ages," in Bridenthal, Koonz, and Stuard, *Becoming Visible,* 2nd ed., 153–72.

27. Ken Cuno in footnote 9 of his article "Joint Family Households," 499, writes that a polygamous household with no more than one married male is not a joint household in the definition accepted herein. In other words, to be categorized as a joint or multiple household according to Cuno, it would have to have two or more related conjugal pairs, for example, two brothers in polygamous unions. My position is that we can adapt the definition of multiple or joint family household to polygamous households like those of the Mamluks. This adaptation will allow us to conceptualize the political household as a collection of families and to understand the relationships between the families and within the individual families.

28. Ayalon, "Studies in al-Jabarti," 169.

29. Ibid., 172.

30. Ibid., 285.

31. Ibid., 290–91 and 297.

32. Crecelius included women in *Roots of Modern Egypt* and Hathaway included a chapter on women in *The Politics of Households.*

33. Piterberg, "Formation," 275–89.

34. Waqf no. 2441, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo (no page numbers).

35. Waqf no. 2400, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo (no page numbers). The term *al-hajja* (f., or *al-haj* m.) is an honorific given to women and men who have made the *haj* or pilgrimage

to Mecca; also, it may be given as a sign of respect to older women and men who would be presumed to have made the pilgrimage.

36. Waqf no. 3131, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

37. This information about the household of Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab comes from Crecelius, *Roots of Modern Egypt,* 117–18.

38. Al-Jabarti, *Merveilles,* 2:57.

39. Ibid., 2:145; in Arabic, 2:114.

40. Ibid., 2:150; in Arabic, 2:116.

41. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:192.

42. Carl F. Petry, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in *Women in Middle East History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender,* ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1991), 125.

43. Waqf no. 921, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

44. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:382.

45. Wemple, "Sanctity and Power," 131–51.

46. Ibid., 147.

47. Maza, "Diamond Necklace Affair," 63–89.

48. Ibid., 77.

49. Peirce, *Imperial Harem.*

50. Ibid., 63.

51. See, for example, Amy Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence: An Imperial Soup Kitchen in Jerusalem* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2002).

52. Peirce, *Imperial Harem,* 7.

5. Mamluk Women and the Egyptian Economy:
A Comparative Perspective on Women's Property Rights

1. Comte de Volney, *Voyage,* 2:441.

2. Sonnini, *Travels,* 164.

3. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 125.

4. Wharncliffe, W. Moy Thomas, ed., *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* 2 vols. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893), 1:178.

5. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 111.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. See Lloyd Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements, 1601–1740: The Adoption of the Strict Settlement* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983).

9. Lewis Saul Benjamin, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Her Life and Letters, 1689–1762,* by Lewis Melville (pseud.) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 51–52. See also five

volumes by Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1956) and *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* 3 vols. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1965–67).

10. Letter to Montagu dated November 1710, in Wharncliffe, *Letters,* 1:178.

11. Letter to Montagu dated November 1710, in Wharncliffe, *Letters,* 1:178; letter to Montagu dated "about July 4," in Wharncliffe, *Letters,* 1:187.

12. Letter to Montagu dated "about July 4," in Wharncliffe, *Letters,* 1:187; letter to Montagu dated August 1712, in Wharncliffe, *Letters,* 1:192.

13. Lee Holcombe, *Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Women's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1983, 20.

14. W. S. Holdsworth, *A History of English Law,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1923), 3:531.

15. Cited in Holcombe, *Wives and Property,* 25.

16. Marilyn Solomon, *Women and the Law of Property in Early America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), 41.

17. Ibid.

18. Holcombe, *Wives and Property,* 10; Holdsworth, *History of English Law,* 3:533; and Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property 1660–1833* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990); in Staves, see her discussion of the jointure that allowed property to be settled on a married woman, 95–97.

19. Staves, *Married Women,* 133.

20. Bonfield, *Marriage Settlements,* 83.

21. Ibid., 94–95.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 16.

24. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Ware, Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1993).

25. Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

26. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

27. Jane Austen, *Emma* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994), 5.

28. Ibid., 67.

29. Carole Shammas, "Re-Assessing the Married Women's Property Acts," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no. 1 (1994): 9–30.

30. Judith Tucker, "Muftis and Matrimony: Islamic Law and Gender in Ottoman Syria and Palestine," *Islamic Law and Society* 1, no. 3 (1994): 266; and John Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1982), 16.

31. See Tucker, "Muftis," 275.

32. Tucker, *In the House,* 48.

33. Nelly Hanna, "Marriage among Merchant Families in Seventeenth-Century Cairo," in *Women, the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic History,* ed. Amira El-Azhary Sonbol

(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1996), 153. Hanna points out that the Hanafi school of law, the official school of the Ottoman Empire, did not support clauses in a marriage contract that limited rights set down in the Qur'an, such as the right to have four wives. The Hanbalis, on the other hand, said such stipulations were part of a contract and should be respected. In spite of objections by the other schools, all four schools during the Ottoman period allowed stipulations or clauses; Hanna, "Marriage," 147.

34. *Holy Qur'an,* 180.

35. Ibid., IV:2, 181.

36. Ibid., IV:4, 179.

37. Ibid., IV:34, 190.

38. A good introduction to the *waqf* system is Barnes, *Introduction to Religious Foundations,* 6. For studies of the *waqf* institution during the Ottoman period, see also Baer, "Women and *Waqf*," 9–28; Gerber, "*Waqf* Institution," 29–45; Randi Carolyn Deguilhem-Schoem, "History of *Waqf* and Case Studies from Damascus in Late Ottoman and French Mandatory Times" (PhD diss., New York Univ., 1986); Butrus 'Abd al-Malik and Daniel Crecelius, "A Late Eighteenth-Century Egyptian Waqf Endowed by a Sister of the Mamluk Shaykh al-Eyey Muhammad Bey Abou al-Dhahab," *Arab Historical Review for Ottoman Studies* 1–2 (1990): 9–14; and Muhammad 'Afifi, *Al-Awqaf wa al-Haya al-Iqtisadiyya fi Misr fi-al-'Asr al-'Uthmani* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1991).

39. For a useful discussion of the administration of the *waqf* system in Ottoman Cairo, see the chapter "Structures et Institutions" in Nelly Hanna's *Habiter au Caire: La Maison Moyenne et Ses Habitants aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1991), 5–36.

40. Randi Deguilham, "Gender Blindness and Societal Influence in Late Ottoman Damascus: Women as Creators and Managers of Endowments," *Hawwa: Journal of Women in the Middle East and the Islamic World* 1, no. 3 (2003): 329–50.

41. Baer in his analysis of women's *waqf*s in sixteenth-century Istanbul came to similar conclusions about the reasons why women created *waqf*s and saw a similar pattern in the women's stipulations. See Baer, "Women and *Waqf*," 27.

42. Daniel Crecelius notes an increase in the founding of *waqf*s in the eighteenth century. See "Incidences of *Waqf* Cases in Three Cairo Courts," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 29 (June 1986): 176–89. My research in the Ministry of Awqaf shows an increase in the number of *waqf*s established by women from mid-century on, 1759–1800. See Mary Ann Fay, *Women and Households: Gender, Power and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Egypt* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ., 1993).

43. This number is according to Muhammad Husam al-Din King 'Uthman, then the director of the archives section *(daftarkhana)* of the Ministry of Awqaf.

44. The numbers are 509, 510, 513, and 514 in the Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

45. Gerber, "*Waqf* Institution," 37.

46. Baer, "Women and *Waqf*," 10.

47. Ibid.

48. Doumani, "Endowing Family," 3–41.

49. Randi Deguilhem, "Gender Blindness and Societal Influence in Late Ottoman Damascus: Women as Creators and Managers of Endowments," *Hawwa: Journal of Women in the Middle East and the Islamic World* 1, no. 3 (2003): 329–50.

50. Ibid., 340.

51. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* ed. J. Milton Cowan (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1980), 847. Muhammad M. Amin and Laila A. Ibrahim eds., *Al-Mastalahat al-Mi'mariyya fi al-Watha'iq al-Mamlukiyya* [Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents] (Cairo: American Univ. in Cairo Press, 1990), 115, defines *makan* as "place" and says that "the term is used in the documents to mean any building or unit of a building except a mosque, a *madrassa* (Qur'anic school) or palace." Although the terms in the volume were compiled from documents of the classical Mamluk period (1250–1517), they are relevant to the eighteenth century because the Mamluk style of architecture, particularly domestic architecture, continued to dominate building styles until the Muhammad 'Ali period of the nineteenth century when public and private architecture in Egypt began to be "Turkified." Ulku Bates discusses the question of why Mamluk architectural forms continued to be pre-dominant during the Ottoman period in "Facades of Ottoman Cairo," in *The Ottoman City and Its Parts,* ed. Irene Bierman, Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj, and Donald Preziosi (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzos, 1991), 129–72.

52. Waqf no. 2700, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

53. Waqf no. 2239, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

54. Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants,* 1:409.

55. Baer, "Women and *Waqf*," 27.

56. Petry, "Class Solidarity," 133.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 133–34.

59. Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants,* 1:258–59.

60. One of the most notable features of the *waqf*s from the period is the endowment of a portion of property, which could legally be divided into twenty-four parts called *qirat.* In the documents, the donor is recorded as endowing a share or *hissa* (pl. *hisas*) of a certain piece of property, and then the value of the share is given. Undoubtedly, the parceling of property is due at least in part to the rules governing Islamic inheritance. After a division of property, each party was considered a unique and independent proprietor, so that shares in commercial or agricultural property could be endowed by the owner. Another reason for the division of property, as Nelly Hanna noted, was the ancient practice of Cairenes' buying property jointly. In her study of middle-class housing during the Ottoman period, she found that only 49 percent of the buyers (1,486 of 3,041) bought an entire property. See Hanna, *Habiter au Caire.*

61. Waqf no. 2462, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

62. Waqf no. 1194, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

63. Waqf no. 138, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

64. Waqf no. 500, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

65. Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants*, 2:406.

66. Ibid.

67. Waqf no. 2441, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

68. Waqf no. 509, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo. The ministry's index gives four different numbers for this waqf—509, 510, 513, and 514—established between 1790 and 1804.

69. Waqf no. 936, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

70. Waqf no. 929, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

71. Waqf and additions with the following numbers: 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, and 2424 in the Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

72. Waqf nos. 2406 and 2407, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

73. Waqf no. 2408, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

6. The City as Text: Space, Gender, and Power in Cairo

1. André Raymond, "Essai de Geographie des Quartiers de Residence Aristocratique au Caire au XVIIIème Siècle," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 6 (1963): 18.

2. Cited in Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and Its Environs: From Azbak to Isma'il, 1476–1879* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1985), 76.

3. Irene Bierman, "The Ottomanization of Crete," in Bierman, Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj, and Preziosi, *Ottoman City, 53–75.*

4. For the enduring influence of Mamluk architecture on domestic architecture, see Alexander Lezine, "Les Salles Nobles des Palais Mamlukes," *Annales Islamologique* 10 (1972): 63; and also Revault, "L'Architecture Domestique à l'Époque Ottomane," 2:285.

5. Donald Preziosi, "The Mechanics of Urban Meanings," in Bierman, Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj, and Preziosi, *Ottoman City, 5.*

6. Cited by Linda W. Donley-Reid in "A Structuring Structure: The Swahili House," in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space,* ed, Susan Kent (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 115.

7. The original name of the Fatimid capital was al-Mansuriyya, but four years later it was changed to al-Qahira.

8. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo,* 70–71.

9. For a discussion of the feudal nature of the Mamluk system, see Susan Jane Staffa, *Conquest and Fusion: The Social Evolution of Cairo, A.D. 642–1850* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 116–35; and Abu-Lughod, *Cairo,* 70–71.

10. The Khalig al-Misri was the city's main canal. It was paved over in the nineteenth century and is today Shari'a Port Said. Its opening each year at the height of the Nile flood

was a great ceremonial occasion attended by the Ottoman governor and regiments, the Mamluk amirs, and the people of the city.

11. Cited in Abu-Lughod, *Cairo,* 36.

12. The population figures come from Abu-Lughod, *Cairo,* 36.

13. For a history of Bulaq, see Hanna, *Urban History.*

14. *Wakala*s and *khan*s, also known as *caravanserais,* were the foundation of Cairo's commercial economy. They provided storehouses for goods in transit or for sale on the Cairene market, shops on the ground floor, and living quarters for merchants on the floor above.

15. There is considerable disagreement about the state of Cairo and its economy during the period of the Circassian or Burji sultanate (1382–1517), so named because they were housed at the Citadel. The major source of dispute is the effect of the Black Death, which arrived for the first time in the autumn of 1348 and was followed by visitations in 1388 and 1389. The chronicler al-Maqrizi painted a gloomy picture of ruin, desolation, and abandonment of parts of the city. Contemporary scholars like Michael Dols and Ira Lapidus have argued that the fifteenth century was one of decline generally because of the effects of the plague, the Mongol threat, the decline in grain revenues, and the decay of the sugar and textile industries. However, this view is disputed by Janet Abu-Lughod and Nelly Hanna. Abu-Lughod has noted that the eyewitness accounts of Ibn Khaldun and European travelers like Frescobaldi and Meshullam Menahem confirm the renewed power and vigor of the Mamluk capital. Hanna has pointed to the stability and prosperity of Sultan Qaytbay's reign (1467–96) and the large number of construction projects undertaken, including roads, bridges, and docks. She also noted the large number of commercial buildings that were constructed by sultans who controlled the East-West spice trade after the declaration of the state monopoly. For example, between Bayn al-Qasrayn and al-Azhar, one square kilometer and one of the busiest sections of Cairo, thirteen new commercial warehouses were constructed. See Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977); Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984); Abu-Lughod, *Cairo,* 41; and Hanna, *Urban History,* 19.

16. Behrens-Abouseif, *Azbakiyya,* 22–23.

17. Ibid., 25.

18. Raymond, "Essai," 74.

19. Ulku Bates, "Facades of Ottoman Cairo," in Bierman, Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj, and Preziosi, *Ottoman City,* 129–72.

20. Revault, "L'Architecture Domestique à l'Époque Ottomane," 2:285.

21. Shaw, "Landholding," 94–95.

22. Chabrol's population estimate for Cairo of 300,000 differs from Jomard's, whose estimate is 263,000. Chabrol de Volvic, Comte Jacques Joseph Gaspard Antoine, "Essai sur les Moeurs des Habitants de l'Egypte," in *Description de l'Egypte,* vol. 2, *IIe partie* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1822), 364; and J. B. Jomard, "Description de la Ville et de la Citadelle

du Kaire," in *Description de l'Egypte,* 2nd ed., vol. 18, *Ie partie* (Paris: L'Imprimerie de C. L. F. Panckouche, c. 1821–30), 127.

23. According to Raymond, the end of the eighteenth century saw a decline in the city's economy, with high inflation, particularly in the price of wheat, and widespread famine. There was also an increase in internecine warfare among the Mamluks and between them and the Ottomans. The city experienced an outbreak of the plague in 1791 that killed 1,500–2,000 persons a day, including fourteen Mamluk beys. See Raymond's "Le Caire," 27.

24. Jomard, "Description de la Ville," 119.

25. Ibid., 123.

26. Ibid., 115.

27. Ibid., 117.

28. According to Chabrol, the number of Mamluks was 12,000, while Jomard's estimate was 10,500; Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 364; and Jomard, "Description de la Ville," 128.

29. Raymond, "Le Caire," 21.

30. Ibid., 79–81.

31. Raymond, "Essai," 68.

32. Ibid., 84.

33. Ibid., 84.

34. Ibid., 88.

35. Ibid., 49–50.

36. Ibid., 73–74.

37. Ibid., 59.

38. Waqf no. 2215, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

39. Sonnini, *Travels,* 465–66.

40. Niebuhr, *Travels,* 123–24.

41. Ibid., 123.

42. Ibid., 143.

43. Ibid., 143–44.

44. Savary, *Lettres,* 1:76.

45. Sonnini, *Travels,* 421.

46. Niebuhr, *Travels,* 81.

47. Ibid., 81–82.

48. Sonnini, *Travels,* 423.

49. Savary, *Lettres,* 1:183.

50. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 169.

51. Savary, *Lettres,* 2:181.

52. Comte de Volney, *Voyage,* 1:200.

53. See note 5 in chapter 1.

54. Denon, *Travels,* 260–62.

55. See plate 39, "Vue de la Place appellée Birket el-Fyl," and plate 40, "Vue de la Place Ezbekiyey," in Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs."

56. Niebuhr, *Travels,* 147–48.

57. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 192.

58. Sonnini, *Travels,* 451–52.

59. Denon, *Travels,* 260–62.

60. Comte de Volney, *Voyage,* 2:441.

61. Ibid., 441–42.

62. Ibid., 442.

7. The Architecture of Seclusion: In Search of the Historical Harem

1. Denon, *Travels,* 260–62.

2. Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, eds., *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981).

3. Lidia Sciama, "The Problem of Privacy in Mediterranean Anthropology," in *Women and Space,* ed. Shirley Ardener (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 110.

4. Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 162.

5. Abraham Marcus, "Privacy in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo: The Limits of Cultural Ideals," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1986): 167.

6. See Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* ed. J. Milton Cowan (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1980), 171.

7. Ibid.

8. Abu-Lughod, "Islamic City," 167.

9. Hanna, *Habiter au Caire,* 23.

10. Savary, *Lettres,* 1:171.

11. George Ebers, "L'Egypte du Caire à Philae," cited in Edmond Pauty, "L'Architecture au Caire depuis la Conquête Ottomane," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 36 (1936): 50.

12. This part of my analysis of the house and of the harem is indebted to the work of social and cultural geographers, particularly Doreen Massey and her conceptualization of space as flexible and porous. See Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labor: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and also works by Gill Valentine and Linda McDowell including McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999); and Valentine with Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchen, eds., *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (London: Sage Publications, 2004).

13. Amos Rapoport, "Systems of Activities and Systems of Settings," in *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space,* ed. Susan Kent (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 9.

14. Donald Sanders, "Building Conventions and Archeology: Methods for the Analysis of Ancient Architecture," in Kent, *Domestic Architecture,* 46.

15. Abu-Lughod, "Islamic City," 155–76.

16. Pierre Bourdieu developed the idea of the house as a "structuring structure." His idea was taken up by Anthony Giddens, who described the house as "a form of structuration." The house as a structuring structure means that while the house is the result of certain processes and behavior, it also acts to structure or influence behavior. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians,* trans. A. Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962); Pierre Bourdieu, "The Berber House," in *Rules and Meaning,* ed. Mary Douglas (Suffolk, UK: Penguin, 1973); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977); and Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

17. Cited in Donley-Reid, "A Structuring Structure," 115.

18. Jacques Revault, "L'Architecture Domestique du Caire à l'Époque Mamelouke (XIII–XVI Siècles)," in *Palais et Maisons du Caire,* vol. 1, *Époque Mamelouke,* ed. Jean-Claude Garcin, Bernard Maury, Jacques Revault, and Mona Zakariya. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982, 33.

19. Alexandre Lezine, "Les Salles Nobles des Palais Mamlukes," *Annales Islamologiques* 10 (1972): 63.

20. Cited by Revault in "L'Architecture Domestique du Caire à l'Époque Mamelouke," 32.

21. Ibid., 32–33.

22. Ibid., 31.

23. K. A. C. Cresswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), 2:127–32.

24. Revault, "L'Architecture Domestique du Caire à l'Époque Mamelouke," 33.

25. Lezine, "Les Salles Nobles," 128 and 148.

26. Gaston Wiet, *Précis de l'Histoire d'Egypte* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1932), 89.

27. Ibid., 89.

28. Ibid., 90.

29. Revault, "L'Architecture Domestique du Caire à l'Époque Mamelouke," 112.

30. In all discussions of domestic architecture, floors are designated in the European way beginning with the ground floor *(rez-de-chausse),* first floor, second floor, etc., instead of the numbering used in the United States, in which the ground floor is designated the first floor.

31. Revault, "L'Architecture Domestique du Caire à l'Époque Mamelouke," 215.

32. Edmund Pauty, *Le Palais et Les Maisons d'Époque Musulmane au Caire* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1932), 50.

33. My conclusions about the harem are based on repeated visits to the Bayt al-Razzaz, the Bayt al-Suhaimi, the house of Ibrahim al-Sinnari, the Palace of Bashtaq, and the

Musafirkhana Palace. The latter was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1998 but I was able to visit it and photograph it in 1995–96.

34. The documents include the following from the archives of the Egyptian Antiquity Project at the American Research Center in Egypt: the *waqf* deed of Amir Ahmed Agha al-Razzaz dated 1233/1818, in Arabic and in translation; the *waqf* of Sultan Qayt Bey dated 895/1490 in English translation; a 1977 report on the condition of the building by Victoria Meinecke-Berg; and a 1979 report on the building by Paul E. Walker and Adil Yassin entitled "Restoration of the Bayt al-Razzaz."

35. Paul E. Walker and Adil Yassin, "Restoration of the Bait al-Razzaz," prepared for the American Research Center in Egypt and drawing extensively from the analysis of the building by Victoria Meinecke-Berg. The Walker-Yassin report was published in *Islamic Cairo: Architectural Conservation and Urban Development of the Historic Center,* proceedings of a seminar organized by the Goethe Institute, Cairo, Oct. 1–5, ed. Michael Meinecke (London: Art and Archeology Research Papers, 1980), 60.

36. Ibid.

37. Rosaldo, "Women, Culture and Society," 27.

8. Everyday Life in the Harem

1. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 125–26.

2. Guillaume Antoine Olivier, *Voyage dans L'Empire Othoman, L'Egypte et La Perse* (Paris: Chez H. Agosse, Imprimeur-Librarie, 1807).

3. Peirce, *Imperial Harem.*

4. Comte de Volney, *Voyage,* 1:95–96.

5. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 361–526.

6. Ibid., 210.

7. Ibid.

8. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 108.

9. Ibid., 111.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 191.

12. Sonnini, *Travels,* 164.

13. Comte de Volney, *Voyage,* 2:441–42.

14. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 98.

15. Ibid., 96.

16. Ibid., 97.

17. Ibid., 97–98.

18. Savary, *Lettres,* 1:168–69.

19. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 124.

20. Ibid., 387–88.

21. Ibid., 388.

22. Ibid., 389.

23. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," Panckouche edition, 192–93.

24. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 128–29.

25. Savary, *Lettres,* 136–38.

26. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 162.

27. Ibid., 128.

28. Ibid., 129.

29. Ibid., 163.

30. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," Panckouche edition, 211.

31. Ibid., 119.

32. Olivier, *Voyage,* 148–49.

33. Ibid., 150–52.

34. Raymond, "Essai de Geographie," 33.

35. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 385.

36. Peck, *Embassy to Constantinople,* 150.

37. Chabrol, "Essai sur les Moeurs," 126.

9. Changing the Subject: Gender and the History of the Mamluk Revival

1. See Murad Bey's necrology in al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:167–71; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:259–65.

2. See Sitt Nafisa's necrology in al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 4:264; Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 371.

3. See Mustafa Katkhuda al-Qazdughli's necrology in al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:191; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 1:149.

4. Although André Raymond gives the death date of Hasan Katkhuda as 1715, al-Jabarti includes Hasan Katkhuda al-Qazdughli in his list of amirs as of 1732. See Raymond, *Le Caire des Janissaires,* 31–32; and also Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 1:238.

5. For a description of the massacre of the amirs and its aftermath, see al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:148–50; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 1:243–46.

6. Peirce, *Imperial Harem,* 264–65.

7. See al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:148–50; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 1:243–46.

8. Cited in Raymond, *Le Caire des Janissaries,* 30.

9. Ibid.

10. Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants,* 2:415.

11. Waqf no. 2215, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

12. Ibid.

13. Michel Tuchscherer, "Le Pèlerinage de l'Emir Sulayman Gawish al-Qazdugli Sirdar de la Caravane de la Mekke en 1739," *Annales Islamologiques* 24(1988): 159.

14. Al-Damurdashi describes Sulayman's illness as *marad al-qasaba*. See 'Abd al-Rahim, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Rahim, *Kitab al-Durra al-Musana Ta'lif Al-Amir Ahmad al-Katkhuda Al-Damurdsashi Katkhuda 'Azaban* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1989), 211. Crecelius and Bakr translate *marad al-qasaba* as syphilis. However, *qasaba* also has the medical meaning of "trachea," indicating he also may have been suffering from some sort of bronchial or respiratory illness. See Crecelius and Bakr, *Al-Damurdashi's Chronicle,* 319–20.

15. 'Abd al-Rahim, *Kitab al-Durra al-Musana,* 211. Al-Damurdashi's account and his use of the words *akhadha* (to take or to take possession of) and *sahibat* (to accompany someone, to become a friend or associate of someone) indicates that 'Abd al-Rahman did not marry Shawikar but took her into his household and under his protection.

16. See the necrology of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda in al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 2:4–8; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 2:5–10.

17. Peirce, *Imperial Harem,* 17.

18. Ibid.

19. Waqf no. 208, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo.

20. See the necrology of Ibrahim Katkhuda in al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 1:191–92; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 1:312–13.

21. Waqf no. 921, Ministry of Awqaf, Cairo, no page numbers.

22. Ibid.

23. One example of a *waqf* violated within months of the donor's death is that of Muhammad Bey Abu Dhahab, whose *waqfiyya* has been translated and analyzed by Crecelius. In his analysis of the *waqfiyya,* Crecelius noted that Muhammad Bey's successors, Ibrahim and Murad, apportioned between themselves the revenues of a district endowed by Muhammad Bey and that the functions of the collegiate mosque that Muhammad Bey founded were suspended within one year of his death. See Daniel Crecelius, "The Waqfiyah of Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 15 (1978): 83–105; and Daniel Crecelius, "The *Waqfiyah* of Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab II," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 16 (1979): 125–46.

24. See volume 2 of André Raymond's *Artisans et Commerçants* for an analysis of the estates of the *tujjar.*

25. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 4:264; Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 4:371.

26. Peirce, *Imperial Harem,* 23.

27. Laurens, Henry, *L'Expédition d'Egypte, 1898–1901* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1989), 67.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 68.

30. His complete name was Qadi al-Fadil Abu 'Ali 'Abd al-Rahim ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Lakhmi al-Bayani al-Askalani Muhyi al-Din.

31. André Raymond and Gaston Wiet, *Le Marchés du Caire: Traduction Annottee du Texte de Maqrizi* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1979), 285.

32. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:168; Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:260.

33. Denon, *Travels,* 260.

34. Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:264.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 371; and al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 4:264.

37. Laurens, *L'Expédition d'Egypte,* 1989 ed., 408n41.

38. Ibid., 63.

39. Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:244; and al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:156.

40. Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:259; and al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:167.

41. Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:284–85; and al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:184.

42. Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 4:371; and al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 4:264.

43. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:295–96; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:454–55.

44. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:295–96; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:454.

45. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 4:92–93; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 4:132.

46. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:171; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:264.

47. Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib,* 3:169; and Philipp and Perlmann, *History,* 3:262.

10. Epilogue

1. Comte de Volney, *Voyage,* 2:441.

2. Sonnini, *Travels,* 164.

3. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

4. Stuart Hall, "Race, The Floating Signifier," lecture at Goldsmiths College, London, 1996, video recording, intro. Sut Jhally (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1996).

5. See Shaarawi, *Harem Years,* particularly the introduction; Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1995), 4–6, for the author's description of urban harem culture; Leila Ahmed, "Between Two Worlds: The Formation of a Turn-of-the-Century Egyptian Feminist," in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography,* ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), 154–74; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, "Revolutionary Gentlewomen in Egypt," in Beck and Keddie, *Women in the Muslim World,* 261–76; and Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, "Women and Modernization: A Re-evaluation," in Sonbol, *Women, the Family,* 39–51.

6. Marsot, "Revolutionary Gentlewomen," 261–76.

7. See Janaki Nair, "Uncovering the *Zenana:* Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings 1813–1940," in *Expanding the Boundaries of Women's History: Essays on Women in the Third World,* ed. Cheryl Johnson-Odim and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1992), 26–50; and Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation,* chaps. 4 and 5 in particular.

8. Shaarawi, *Harem Years,* 16.

9. Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation,* 32.

10. Ahmed, "Between Two Worlds," 163.

11. Shaarawi, *Harem Years,* 26.

12. Marsot, "Women and Modernization," 45–46.

13. See Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism,* trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (Cairo: American Univ. in Cairo Press, 2000).

14. See Russell, *Creating the New Woman*.

15. "Egypt—First Deputies from Women to Minister," *Jus Suffragi* 17, no. 10 (Aug. 1923): 165. The article is signed Huda Charoui.

16. Deniz Kandiyotti, "Islam and Patriarchy: A Comparative Perspective," in Keddie and Baron, *Women in Middle Eastern History,* 23–44.

Glossary

'abd: slave.

a'yan: local notables who arose as the Ottoman Empire became decentralized; in regions other than Egypt, the a'yan were generally not Mamluks.

'a'ila: family.

agha: commander of one of the Ottoman military corps stationed in Egypt after the conquest of 1516–17; see *ojaq*.

akh: brother.

*'alma (*also known colloquially as *'alima):* female dancers who performed on the streets or in private homes.

amir al-haj: the leader of the annual pilgrimage *(haj)* to Mecca; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on.

'ashira: a faction within a Mamluk household.

aslaf: ancestors, forebears; among the Mamluks, the word represented the generations of Mamluks that preceded their own.

'Azaban: the Bachelors corps of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest.

Bab al-Luq: a district in central Cairo.

Bab Zuwayla: a neighborhood in the old walled city that takes its name from one of the gates in the city wall; outside the gate two major streets lead to Rumayla Square at the foot of the citadel where the Ottoman governor was housed and the regiments were garrisoned.

al-bayda: "the white," used in the appellation of a freed female slave to designate her origins in Georgia or Circassia.

bayt: house in Arabic; in Mamluk Egypt, the word is used for a Mamluk household.

bayt al-ta'a: house of obedience; it refers to the passage in the Qur'an that stipulated a wife's obedience to her husband in return for maintenance.

bayt maftuh: open house, which belonged to the head of a powerful Mamluk household or faction and served as the focal point and center of activity for his family, his followers, and his *mamluk*s.

bey; beylicate: the highest ranking Mamluks in Egypt; after the Ottoman conquest, the Sultan created 24 beys to assist in the administration of Egypt; beylicate refers to the institution of the beys within the imperial administration of Egypt.

bint ʿabd Allah: literally "daughter of God's servant"; among the Mamluks, the appellation signified that the woman was a former slave who converted to Islam and did not have a Muslim father.

birka: ponds or small lakes that appeared around Cairo and were formed by the floodwaters of the Nile in its yearly inundation.

Birkat al-Azbakiyya: a small lake west of the old Fatimid city that was filled by the yearly inundation of the Nile; the most exclusive residence in the city, particularly the western shore of the *birka.*

Birkat al-Fil: Elephant Lake, a small lake that was filled by the yearly inundation of the Nile River; an exclusive neighborhood for high-ranking Mamluks.

concubine: a woman slave with whom a man has sexual relations but to whom he is not married. In Islamic law, this is a legal relationship that requires the master to provide financial support for her and any children born to them; the children are born free and become the legal heirs to the father's property. It was customary but not required for a concubine to be freed on the death of her master.

daftardar: treasurer; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on.

devshirme: the Ottoman slave system to provide soldiers for its armies and trained bureaucrats for its administration; carried out in the Balkans through a levy of non-Muslim boys who were trained at imperial schools.

diwan: the body of high-ranking members of the administration of a ruler that meets to advise him; the name refers to the ruler's advisers who were known collectively as the *diwan;* the Ottoman governor had a *diwan* and as power shifted to the Mamluks, the highest-ranking of them convened his own *diwan.*

durqaʿa: the space between the recesses at either end of a formal room where women and men entertained their guests; it was often surmounted by a cupola that brought in light and air.

emin: salaried officials of the Ottoman state who were charged with collecting the agricultural taxes and sending the tax revenues directly to the Ottoman treasury; the system was known as the *emanet.*

feme covert: a legal term in English common law that indicated a woman was under the guardianship of her father, husband, or other male relative and could not own any personal property except clothing and personal ornaments, could not control her real estate, could not make a contract in her own name, and could not own a business.

feme sole: a legal term in English common law indicating that a woman was independent and was legally able to control her property, sign a contract, run a business, and so forth. A woman could be a *feme sole* legally by remaining a spinster, becoming a widow, or securing her husband's permission to act as a *feme sole.*

Gawishan: the Messingers corps of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest.

Gerakisiyya: the Circassian corps of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest.

Gonulluyan: the Volunteers [Gamaliyan or Cameliers] corps of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest.

hammam: a bath, either public or private in the home of the wealthy.

hanut: a retail shop, often part of a *wakala;* see *wakala.*

haramlik: Ottoman Turkish word for the harem.

hasil: a warehouse, often part of a *wakala;* see *wakala.*

hawsh: a courtyard.

Hazara: the Shi'ite minority in Afghanistan.

Hijaz: the Red Sea coast of the Arabian Peninsula in today's Saudi Arabia.

hulvan: the price paid by those who acquired at auction vacant urban and rural tax farms; by 1774, the Ottoman government recognized the seizure of the properties and tax farms of defeated amirs in return for a *hulvan* payment by those who emerged triumphant, thus exacerbating tensions among the Mamluks and internecine fighting.

*iqta' (*also *muqata'):* a feudal system of landholding and taxation that required the holder of the land to provide military service to the Ottoman sultan; replaced by a system of salaried tax collectors called *emin.*

iwan: a feature of Mamluk domestic architecture: recesses facing each other at the extremity of a room with a covered space in between.

jadd: grandfather.

Janissary: the Guardian corps of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest; see *Mustahfizan.*

kashif: provincial governor; these posts were allocated to Mamluks by the Qanun-name of 1525; generally the *kashif*s were the favorite freed slaves of the masters who were expected to ascend to the beylicate.

katkhuda: broadly, the second in command and chief advisor to the head of a regiment *(agha)* or to a Mamluk bey among his household retinue.

al-Khalig al-Misri: the main canal in Cairo that brought the Nile water to city neighborhoods.

khatun and *qadin:* titles given to the concubines of the Ottoman sultan and Mamluk amirs.

khushdashiyya: the horizontal link and enduring relationship between men who were enslaved and manumitted together; a member of the same cohort would refer to another as his *khushdash.*

mastaba: stone bench often found outside a tenement *(rab')* where men congregated to protect the privacy of their wives and daughters inside.

ma'tuq: male freed slave.

ma'tuqa: female freed slave.

madrassa: educational institution; during the early modern period, a *madrassa* provided a religiously based education and was often part of a mosque, and sometimes contained the mausoleum of its founder.

mahr: the dowry that according to Islamic law is paid to the bride by the husband and/or his family.

makan: literally translated as place, site, or location; in a religious endowment (see *waqf*), the word refers to a site that can have multiple locations including a living unit, retail shop, or workshop.

mamluk: Arabic for slave.

Mamluk: capitalized to refer to the period of the Mamluk sultanate from 1260 to 1516–17 and the period of the Mamluk revival from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. *Mamluk* represents a regime and an epoch in Egyptian history; *mamluk* refers to individual slaves.

mandara: the men's salon in an elite home, usually on the ground floor.

maq'ad: the outdoor reception area on the men's side of a palace or an elite home. (See also *qa'a*, the home's primary salon that served as the center of family life and as a reception room for the mistress of the house and her female guests).

mashrabiyya: a screen of turned wood sometimes embedded with colored glass; used to protect household privacy by allowing light and air to enter without making the residents, particularly women, visible from the street.

la mission civilisatrice: civilizing mission, the French equivalent of Great Britain's "white man's burden"; the justification for imperialism and colonialism on the grounds that French influence would elevate the degraded societies of the East.

mu'addin (mu'azzin, colloquial*):* the person chanting the call to prayer.

mu'azzin: the person who chants the call to prayer at the mosque; the call is given five times a day from one of the mosque's minarets or spires.

multazim: a tax farmer.

muqata': see *iqta'*.

Mustahfizan: the Egyptian name for the Janissaries; part of the Ottoman military garrison in the country; see *ojaq*.

Mutafarriqa: the personal corps of the governor of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest.

nazir, nazira: the administrator of a *waqf* (religious endowment).

ojaq: the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest, consisting of seven corps: the Mustahfizan (Guardians, as the Janisarries were known in Egypt), 'Azaban (Bachelors), Mutafarriqa (personal corps of the governor), Gawishan (Messengers), Gonulluyan (Volunteers, known in Egypt as the Gamaliyan or Cameliers), Tefenkjiyan (Riflemen), and Gerakisiyya (Circassian).

para: money circulating during the Ottoman period in Egypt.

qadi: a judge in a *shari'a* (Islamic) court.

qadin: see *khatun*.

*qa'a (*pl. *qa'at):* the home's primary salon, which served as the center of family life and as a reception room for the mistress of the house and her female guests; the *qa'a* was not accessible to men unrelated to the mistress of the house.

qa'im maqam: acting viceroy when the Ottoman governor was absent; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on.

qanunname: imperial edict issued by the Ottoman sultan.

rab': tenement(s) that housed the city's workers and artisans and other members of the lower classes.

riqab: bondage/slavery.

sabil-kuttab: a public fountain with a Qur'anic school above it; a favorite method of dispensing charity by the wealthy since it provided both a necessity of daily

life and Islamic education. Two of the city's most famous were those built by Nafisa al-Bayda and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Katkhuda.

salamlik: men's salon.

al-samra and *al-sawda:* "the brown" and the "black," respectively; both were used in the names of freed female slaves to indicate their origins in sub-Saharan Africa. Women identified as nonwhite had less property to endow and lower status in the Mamluk household.

sanjak bey: the rank of the most powerful Mamluks who held the twenty-four administrative positions in the Sanjakiyya; indicates rank within the Mamluk hierarchy; shortened to *bey* in the names of individual Mamluks. See *beylicate*.

Sanjakiyya: the Ottoman administrative unit created after the conquest of Egypt in 1516–17, composed of twenty-four Mamluks in various official positions. In Ottoman usage, a military or administrative district was called a *sanjak* and its commander's rank was *bey* or *sanjak bey*. In Egypt, the Arabic word for district, *liwa,* was used and the Mamluks holding this rank were called by the title *amir,* from *mir al-liwa al-sharif al-sultani*. The names of these Mamluks included both *amir* and *bey* as in the example of the most powerful Mamluk of his time, al-Amir 'Ali Bey al-Kabir (the great). See *beylicate*.

al-sawda: "the black," used in the names of freed female slaves to indicate their origins in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the religious endowments deeds, women identified this way had less property to endow and lower status in the Mamluk household.

seignories: small principalities.

shari'a: Islamic law.

shaykh: the title of a religiously educated man or an honorific for a notable; also used as a title for the ruler of a small principality.

shaykh al-balad: village headman.

sirdar: commander of the troops accompanying the leader of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on; see *amir al-haj*.

sirdar al-khaznah: the leader of the entourage taking the annual tax payment to Istanbul; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on.

sirdar al-quluq: the commander of small forts and police posts at Cairo, Bulaq, and Old Cairo; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on.

sirdar al-safar: the leader of the troops sent annually by Egypt to Istanbul for assignment to service outside of Egypt; post held by Mamluks in the Ottoman administration from the late seventeenth century on.

sitt: Lady; applied to high-ranking Mamluk women; a respectful way to address a woman.

suq: a marketplace as well as a site of artisanal activity.

tab': a follower or client of a Mamluk.

tabaqat: a living unit in tenement or apartment.

tahrir: Istanbul register.

tahtabush: a portico where the master received male visitors of low rank, usually beneath the *maq'ad* or outdoor salon where guests of high rank were received and entertained.

Tefenkjiyan: the Riflemen corps of the Ottoman military garrison in Egypt after the conquest.

tujjar: Cairo's wealthiest merchants.

*'ulama (*sing. *'alim):* religiously trained scholars who could fill various roles as teachers, preachers, or *qadi*s.

ustadh: master.

valide sultan: mother of the Ottoman sultan's son and heir to the throne, i.e., the mother of the sultan.

wakala: a foundation of Egypt's commercial economy; a building that combined shops, artisanal workshops, warehouses, and living quarters in one structure as well as a variety of residences.

walad: son.

wali: usually the father or grandfather of a minor child who had the legal authority to act on his or her behalf. However, the guardian's authority to act for the minor child ended when the child reached his or her majority.

*walid (*pl. *awlad):* father.

*waqf (*pl. *awqaf):* a religious endowment that can be of two types: *ahli,* family endowment, or *khayri,* pious endowment. The difference is that the pious endowment immediately benefits the religious and charitable causes stipulated in the endowment deed *(waqfiyya),* while the *ahli* allows the donor to benefit during her lifetime and the heirs stipulated in the deed to benefit until the line is extinguished. Then the endowment income is paid to support the religious and charitable causes stipulated in the endowment. All religious endowments come under the supervision and jurisdiction of the Islamic courts.

waqf ahli: family religious endowment; see *waqf.*

waqf khayri: religious endowment for religious and/or charitable purposes only; see *waqf.*

waqfiyya: religious endowment deed.

zawiyya: associated with Sufi-ism; a lodge that provided housing for pilgrims and a school; the term can also refer to a Sufi order.

zawja: wife.

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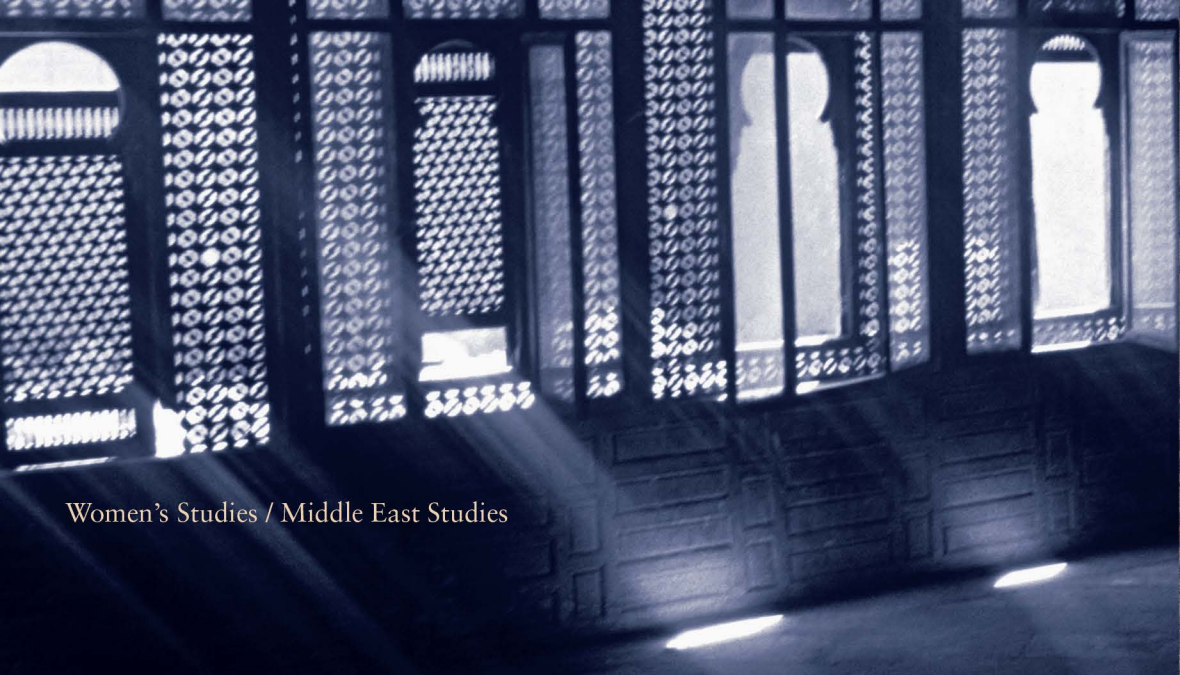
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